

# PRESERVATION CONNECTICUT NEWS

Mrs. E. McKinney's tourist home in Waterbury was one of the first businesses listed in the Green Book, in 1938.  
Preservation Connecticut

## Connecticut's *Green Book* heritage

Sites of African American travel and community in the Jim Crow era

By Alyssa Lozupone, Daniella Occhineri, and Cecelia Puckhaber

**T**he *Negro Traveler's Green Book* (known simply as the *Green Book*) was an annual guide listing establishments which welcomed African American travelers during the Jim Crow era. The *Green Book* was originally conceived by Victor Hugo Green and published from 1938 to 1966. During this time, African American travelers faced tremendous risks while on the road, including refusal of service, unreasoned arrest, and targeted acts of violence. While typically associated with the South, racial discrimination pervaded the North as well.

Preservation Connecticut interns Daniella Occhineri, of Southern Connecticut State University, and Cecilia Puckhaber, of Central Connecticut State University, researched and documented Connecticut's existing *Green Book* sites this spring, building on previous research by Alyssa Lozupone, formerly of the State Historic Preservation Office. Information they produced will be uploaded to "The Architecture of *The Negro Travelers' Green Book*," a website hosted by the University of Virginia. Turn to page 4 to see what they found.



New York Public Library

## PRESERVATION AT THE CAPITAL

# Legislative update: SHPO under scrutiny

The Connecticut General Assembly's 2023 session adjourned just after midnight on June 8. This was a long session, the primary task being to set a budget for the next two years. For once, budgeting was relatively easy. With the state's coffers comfortably full, the most difficult decision was how much to cut taxes.

That left it to other proposals to provide the drama. For preservationists, the most significant was a bill related to the State Historic Preservation Office's mandate to review projects that receive state funding or state permitting for their potential effect on historic sites. Carried out under the state Environmental Policy Act, the goal of such review is to avoid or minimize harm to natural or historic resources. Although SHPO does not have the power to require that historic resources be preserved, its recommendations can be important in shaping projects.

As originally submitted, the SHPO bill would have allowed "any municipality aggrieved by a determination made by the State Historic Preservation Officer...concerning the renovation or rehabilitation of an historic building or property [to] appeal such determination at a hearing before the Department of Economic and Community Development."

The bill appeared to arise from projects in Waterbury and other towns where SHPO advised against demolishing historic industrial buildings. According to the *Connecticut Examiner*, Thomas Hyde, chief executive officer of the Naugatuck Valley Regional Development Corporation, testified to the Commerce Committee that SHPO decisions had frustrated local development. "Hyde acknowledged the value of historic preservation but said cities like Waterbury with numerous brownfields—contaminated industrial sites—were hampered by the need for SHPO approval to demolish old properties."

In his testimony, State Historic Preservation Officer Jonathan Kinney said, "we want to make it clear that SHPO does not view historic preservation and economic development as two opposite ends of a spectrum. Historic preservation activities are an important economic driver in many local communities, for the State of Connecticut, and across the nation."

Mr. Kinney pointed out that the bill appeared to conflict with federal and state laws, such as federally mandated project reviews. Moreover, it would allow untrained officials from DECD to override the professional expertise of the State Historic Preservation Office—to the detriment of the State's commitment to the preservation of its historic resources.

Representatives from Preservation Connecticut, Connecticut Preservation Action (the statewide lobbying organization for historic preservation), and local organizations, as well as individuals from around the state, also submitted testimony in opposition to the bill.

Legislators seem to have recognized the bill's shortcomings. The bill that was passed was completely re-written to call for a



working group to study SHPO's role in administering historic preservation review processes and make recommendations for future legislation.

Specifically, the bill calls for the working group to examine:

- (1) "the historic preservation consultation process;
- (2) timelines for historic preservation reviews;
- (3) definitions of the roles of parties involved in the historic preservation review process;
- (4) an outline of the steps in the historic preservation review process;
- (5) specific goals and outcomes of the historic preservation review process; and
- (6) an appeals process for municipalities to appeal determinations made by the State Historic Preservation Officer pursuant to sections 22a-1 to 22a-1h [the Environmental Policy Act], inclusive, of the general statutes and the regulations adopted thereunder, concerning the renovation or rehabilitation of historic buildings or properties."

The working group will operate under the auspices of the Commerce Committee. Its membership is to include legislators, state officials, and representatives of both preservation and economic development groups—although the balance seems to be tilted toward property development interests.

Preservation Connecticut, along with Connecticut Preservation Action and other preservationists, will monitor the formation of the working group, follow its meetings, and provide informed input.

In other actions, the General Assembly approved funding to create an historic preservation toolkit, as recommended by another working group established in 2021 to investigate ways of protecting and promoting historic properties. PCT executive director Jane Montanaro was a member of that group. The toolkit will likely take the form of a printed document and a website.

Finally, the legislature approved a revision to the Historic Homeowner Rehabilitation Tax Credit, which will allow homeowners to apply tax credits to their own income taxes, rather than selling the credits to a corporation. The change takes effect in 2024. 🌿

## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This June has brought several new faces to Preservation Connecticut. All of them offer new talents and viewpoints to our organization and increase our capacity to preserve and protect Connecticut's historic places.

In June the board elected **Priyanka Panjwani** of Hartford as a Trustee. An experienced conservation architect in her native India, Priyanka has worked on conservation projects such as restoration and repair management of Louis I. Kahn buildings at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad campus. She has also done extensive research and writing on climate change and teaches, most recently at Capital Community College in Hartford on the 'Power of Place.'

We also welcomed the first recipient of our new **Edward F. Gerber Fellowship, Anna Fossi**. Thanks to the generous funding by the namesake Preservation Connecticut Trustee, we can offer a six-month fellowship to Anna, who is currently finishing her master's in public history at Central Connecticut State University. Anna is interested in local and community history projects, with particular emphasis



New Trustee Priyanka Panjwani

on LGBTQ, Indigenous, and popular culture histories. She will be working with us on a proposal to aid historic churches in the East Side neighborhood of Bridgeport. (Read about this project now on our blog, and there will be more in the next issue of *Preservation Connecticut News*.)

We also have a summer intern, **Matthew Breier** of Woodbridge, who is an undergraduate student at the University of Pennsylvania

focusing on history, anthropology, and classical studies. He will provide administrative assistance to the Adam Stanton House Museum in Clinton, coordinating private and public capital grants and preservation restrictions.

Special events also added excitement to the past months. In May, Wes Haynes led our members on a special tour of the **First Presbyterian Church of Stamford**, commonly known as the Fish Church. We learned about the fascinating history of this magnificent National Historic Landmark and the daunting challenge of the current preservation projects underway. Thank you, Wes, for taking us on a detailed tour.

Preservation Connecticut was proud to be a partner organization for the **Docomomo\_US national symposium**, which was held June 21-25, in New Haven. Docomomo is an international organization for the documentation and conservation of modern movement architecture, and the conference attracted more than 350 registrants from all over the country and beyond. Participants considered The Complexities of the American Modern City and visited local wonders such as the Yale University Art Gallery, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Hotel Marcel, and Dixwell Avenue Congregational United Church of Christ. As the closing plenary speaker, former PCT Chair **Sara Bronin**, now Chair of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, stressed the need for the preservation movement to evolve to meet challenges such as climate change and outlined initiatives by the Council to understand new technologies and consider updates to federal policies. In addition, Deputy Director Chris Wigren led a walking tour that highlighted urban renewal and historic preservation in New Haven's Wooster Square neighborhood.

—Jane Montanaro

Preservation Connecticut is a statewide nonprofit membership organization established as the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation 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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**Connecticut**  
still revolutionary

## The Green Book in Connecticut

Throughout the duration of the *Green Book*, African American travelers often found themselves driving through Connecticut on their way from New York to Boston. In the 1938 edition, the section listing Connecticut sites is accompanied by a short passage advertising the newly constructed Merritt Parkway, built to bypass the old Boston Post Road: "This highway has been completed thus far and will in time take one into Boston, Mass." So, it is no surprise that many Connecticut sites listed in the *Green Book* were hotels and motels found along the highways.

However, not all travelers were simply passing through. Connecticut was also home to its own tourist attractions and vacation destinations. Several editions of the *Green Book* had a section at the back titled "Summer Resorts" or, later, "Vacation Section" with Connecticut listings. Some people may have been headed towards the West Haven beaches, as made evident by the sheer number of seaside hotels listed in the *Green Book*. Others may have been travelling to New Haven for its rich jazz scene. And in at least one case—Camp Bennett in South Glastonbury—the listing was a destination itself.

Many of these sites not only catered to tourists, but also to Black migrants from the South who needed help assimilating to life in Northern urban centers. During the Great Migration that started around 1910, southern African Americans relocated to states such as Connecticut in search of better employment opportunities. With the onset of World War I, as able-bodied White men were sent overseas, Black migrants, as well as women, filled jobs within the industrial sector. A similar pattern emerged during World War II, with the expansion of the national defense industry and other wartime economies.

These waves of migrants established vibrant African American communities throughout industrial and large coastal cities across Connecticut. The growth and geographic concentration of the African American population was matched by the emergence of businesses and social organizations, many of which would be listed

in the *Green Book*. For example, the Pearl Street Neighborhood House in Waterbury was a community center located within one of the city's largest Black neighborhoods. Local community members accommodated migrants as well as travelers and also engaged in civil rights advocacy. Over time, these communities and businesses expanded to other communities and, by the late 1950s, businesses in rural areas such as Moodus, Pomfret, and Sharon were included in Connecticut *Green Book* entries.

While racism and Jim Crow are typically associated with the south, Black people travelling through northern states were not exempt from segregation or racial violence. For instance, the Ku Klux Klan was active throughout Connecticut in both major cities and rural areas until the 1980s. African American travelers passing through Connecticut on their way between New York and Boston were advised to stick to major highways and avoid stopping in small towns. There are numerous anecdotes in which Black people were denied service in some hotels and establishments. As such, the *Green Book* was as much of a necessity in Connecticut as other states across the country.

Over the 28 years of the *Green Book's* publication, 124 Connecticut businesses were listed in the guidebook. These establishments represented a full spectrum of amenities, including hotels, tourist homes, restaurants, gas stations, and beauty parlors. Most of Connecticut's *Green Book* sites were located in major urban centers: Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, New London, Stamford, and Waterbury. Over half of these sites have since been demolished, and very few are recognized through the National Register of Historic Places. Of those that are listed in the Register, almost none cite African American history as an area of significance, and none mention the *Green Book*. Very few are recognized on the Connecticut Freedom Trail. Many of those demolished were lost during the urban renewal movement in which city planners sought to clear out so-called "slums," disproportionately dispossessing African American families in the process.

## Some Green Book sites in Connecticut

### BRIDGEPORT

**YWCA Phyllis Wheatley Branch, 56 Beach Street. Listed 1941. NR, East Bridgeport HD\*.**

The Young Woman's Christian Association (YWCA) Phyllis Wheatley Branch opened sometime between 1898 and 1913. Named after the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Black poet (who spelled her name Phillis), the Branch was an African American community space and resource center. From 1919 to 1935, the building was also home to the International Institute, which helped immigrants from Europe adjust to their new environment.

The Phyllis Wheatley Branch hosted a variety of services and activities for the community, including dance lessons, school events, and social clubs. Members of the Branch also corresponded with the civil rights activist W.E.B. Du Bois and *The Crisis* magazine regarding several theatrical productions. Soon after its establishment, the Branch became an integral support system for Bridgeport's burgeoning African American community. During an interview conducted by the Bridgeport Library History Center in 1983, former Superintendent of Schools and YWCA Finance Committee Member, Geraldine Farrar Johnson, reminisced that she and her peers were "not welcome at the main YWCA" and so the Phyllis Wheatley branch became a "haven for Black people."

The Phyllis Wheatley Branch only appeared in the *Green Book's* 1941 edition, listed as a hotel. A year later, the main Bridgeport YWCA began admitting Black members, and the Phyllis Wheatley Branch was integrated into the YWCA on Golden Hill Street (see below). Today, 56 Beach Street houses the Polish Army Veterans Association of America, continuing the site's role as a cultural and social gathering place.

\* NR: National Register  
HD: Historic District  
Freedom Trail: Connecticut Freedom Trail

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The YWCA opened its Phyllis Wheatley Branch in Bridgeport to serve African American women. In 1942 it merged with the main YWCA.



**YWCA Golden Hill Branch, 263 Golden Hill Street. Listed 1949-1962. NR, Golden Hill HD.**

The YWCA opened its first Bridgeport location in 1895 to improve the physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual welfare of young rural women as they acclimated to their new urban lifestyles. Membership and support services at the main YWCA were strictly limited to White women, with Black women organizing their own Phyllis Wheatley Branch (see above). However, Black women continued to resist segregation within the broader YWCA. In 1937, the feminist and civil rights activist Dr. Dorothy Height began working for the YWCA in Harlem. She later rose to prominence within the YWCA national organization where she began pushing for desegregation. Despite initial pushback, the organization soon began implementing the “One YWCA” policy which sought to integrate the organization on both the local and national levels.

By 1942 the Bridgeport YWCA was desegregated; the main YWCA offices and the Phyllis Wheatley branch moved into a new and improved facility located at 263 Golden Hill Street. The YWCA adopted a new mission to help working women in Bridgeport regardless of skin color, and the site on Golden Hill Street appeared in the

*Green Book* by 1949. Listed as a hotel, it carried on the tradition of its predecessor, providing accommodation to African American travelers and visitors.

Throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the YWCA underwent several major changes. In the early 1970s, the facility formed three major branches: the Center for Racial Justice, the Women’s Center, and the Center for Creative Leisure. In the 1980s, the YWCA again changed its mission to focus on abused women and victims of domestic violence and moved to a new location at 753 Fairfield Avenue. By 1995, the organization completely dropped its association with the YWCA and rebranded itself as the Center for Family Justice.

**The Arcade Hotel, 1001 Main Street. Listed 1963-64 and 1966-67 issues. NR, individual and Downtown Bridgeport South HD.**

The Arcade Hotel was one of the oldest operating hotels in Bridgeport and a key feature of the city’s central business district, incorporating a shopping arcade added to the original Greek Revival structure in 1886.

Throughout the civil rights movement, pressure from protestors and activists led to the gradual desegregation

of hotels and other accommodations across Connecticut. In 1953, the General Assembly expanded the Public Accommodations Act to prevent discrimination in establishments such as hotels and restaurants. While the legislation did not fully eliminate segregation in the state, the effects of the civil rights movement were reflected in the increased number of Connecticut hotels listed in the *Green Book* during the 1960s.

The Arcade Hotel was one of many establishments that decided to desegregate due to this momentum; it was listed in the *Green Book*’s 1963-64 and 1966-67 editions. However, by the 1970s, the Arcade was severely impacted by a downturn in downtown retail, and the hotel closed. In 2012, the building was converted to apartments.

**W&T Garage, 179 William Street. Listed 1947-1952. NR, East Bridgeport HD (noncontributing).**

According to an advertisement in the 1949 Bridgeport City Directory, the W&T Garage was an automotive repair shop that specialized in truck services and also provided washing, storage, and greasing. Under the ownership of local resident Christopher S. Williams, the W&T Garage was listed in the *Green Book* from 1947 to 1952. Williams lived with his mother and brother, a tailor, in a small Black enclave of three multi-family dwellings on Howard Avenue between State Street and Fairfield Avenue (none of which survive today). He worked at the W&T Garage since at least 1944, and after it closed was employed at an auto service shop on Stratfield Avenue. That garage did not appear in the *Green Book*, perhaps because Williams had no control or authority to guarantee service. Today, 179 William Street is home to Vaz Quality Works LLC, a construction company founded in 2000 by Joe and Luis Vaz.

*continued on next page*

Postcard, Kullerlowe archive



Howard Johnson's restaurants and motels ran listings in the *Green Book* as a nationwide policy beginning in 1963. Connecticut Hojos were located in Darien, East Hartford (pictured), and Hamden.

## EAST HARTFORD

**Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge, 490 Main Street. Listed 1963-64, 1966-67.**

Howard Johnson's was a restaurant chain founded in Massachusetts in 1925. In 1954, the company opened its first motel in Savannah, Georgia, eventually growing to more than 1,000 franchised restaurants and 500 motor lodges. East Hartford became home to a restaurant, opened in 1958, and a lodge soon after, just off the exit of what had been the Wilbur Cross Highway and was designated as I-84 that year. It was Connecticut's first Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge and Restaurant complex, featuring more than eighty guest rooms, a ranch-style gate lodge, swimming pool and restaurant.

Howard Johnson's restaurants in Durham, North Carolina, and Chicago were the settings for anti-segregation protests in 1962. In December of that year, the company issued a policy statement that its restaurants were to serve customers without discrimination; presumably this applied to its motor lodges as well. The *Green Book* listings for Howard Johnson locations began the following year.

The last of the Howard Johnson's restaurants and motels were sold off in 1975. The East Hartford motel has changed brands several times and is currently an Econo Lodge; the restaurant was eventually converted into the Connecticut State Police Union's Headquarters.

Two other Connecticut Howard Johnson's Motor Lodges, in Hamden and Darien, were listed in the *Green Book* in the same issues; the Hamden property also survives, though greatly altered.

## HARTFORD

**Parlor/ Williams barber shop, 1978 Main Street. Listed 1939-1955.**

A barber shop at 1978 Main Street was simply listed as "Parlor" beginning in the 1939 *Green Book*. It was run by Henry B. Williams from 1937 until at least 1955, though the Williams name was not used in the *Green Book* until 1947. Williams, a native of Dawson, Georgia, moved north with his family by 1920 and became a barber by 1925 before opening his Main Street shop. From then on, he worked and lived within a few blocks in the same predominantly Black neighborhood.

The barber shop was located in a multi-unit storefront building, where another occupant, Ben's Liquor Store, also catered to Black travelers from 1950 to 1955. The liquor store was named after its owner, Benjamin Krivitzky, an immigrant from Russia. It is unclear why the store no longer appeared in the *Green Book* after 1955, as it remained in operation.

Some business in the *Green Book* had White owners, like Ben's Liquor Store in Hartford. Despite serving a Black community, the store was damaged after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968.

In 1968, riots broke out in cities across the country following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. White-owned businesses were often targeted; storefront windows were broken, stores looted, and buildings set on fire. Hartford's North End was no exception, and though Ben's Liquor Store served the Black community, it was one of many businesses damaged in the riots. Photos from the Hartford

Hartford Times Collection, Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library



Public Library show shattered glass and empty shelves. Shortly thereafter, members of the Krivitzky family began leaving Hartford; eventually Benjamin and his wife moved to Florida. Today, Congressman Package Store continues to serve the neighborhood from the building.

**Turf Club, 2243 Main Street, Hartford.  
Listed 1939-1949. NR, Capen-Clark HD.**

The Turf Club was listed as both a tavern and nightclub in the *Green Book* between 1939 and 1949, moving from 1702 Main Street to 2243 Main Street in 1946. Consistently listed in association with the Turf Club was Mrs. Thelma Jackson, who worked as a waitress at the 1702 Main Street location and became the manager of the 2243 Main Street location in 1949. An African American woman from Georgia, Jackson lived in Hartford with her husband and three children, yet another example of African Americans from southern states finding homes and livelihoods in Connecticut's urban centers.

In 1953, four years after the Turf Club stopped appearing in the *Green Book*, 2243

Main Street became the location of the Carpe Diem Fraternity. Established in 1920 by five Hartford Public High School classmates, the Fraternity has been associated with many of the city's prominent African American men throughout its 75-year history, including Walter "Doc" Hurley, founder of the Doc Hurley Classic high school basketball tournament; John C. Clark, Hartford's first African American city council member; and Boce W. Barlow, Jr., a municipal court judge and state senator.

## NEW HAVEN

**The Monterey Jazz Club, 265 Dixwell Avenue. Listed 1947-1967. NR, Winchester Repeating Arms HD.**

During the Great Migration, Black laborers from the South began relocating to Northern cities such as New Haven in search of better job opportunities. Throughout the 1910s to 1940s and beyond, Black migrants found jobs in New Haven's industries, particularly at the Winchester Rifle factory. Many settled in the Dixwell neighborhood, already a center of African American businesses, culture, institutions, and residences.

One of the neighborhood's most famous establishments was the Monterey Jazz Club, founded by vaudeville entertainer Rufus Greenlee in 1934. Listed in the *Green Book* from 1947 to 1967, the Monterey was a prime dining and

entertainment destination for Black travelers visiting New Haven or simply passing through. The club hosted great entertainers from across the country, including Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Ella Fitzgerald, and Billie Holiday. As stated by Rufus Greenlee's daughter Delores Greenlee in an interview with WSHU Public Radio, "A lot of people came through, Nat King Cole. We had a live album recording there with [jazz organist] Johnny Hammond Smith, and he recorded 'Black Coffee.' One of the songs is named after me, thank you."

After Greenlee's death in 1963, the Monterey was refurbished and reopened as a café by his daughters, Delores Greenlee and Virginia Wells, in 1988. However, the café closed once again by 1991. Its fate remained uncertain until January 2023, when the New Haven Board of Alders' Community Development Committee unanimously approved the plan to purchase the building. According to Livable City Initiative Executive Director Arlevia Samuel, officials want to engage with the Dixwell community to determine what to do with the building. Current plans focus on renovating the building to include a commercial ground floor with an affordable residential unit upstairs.

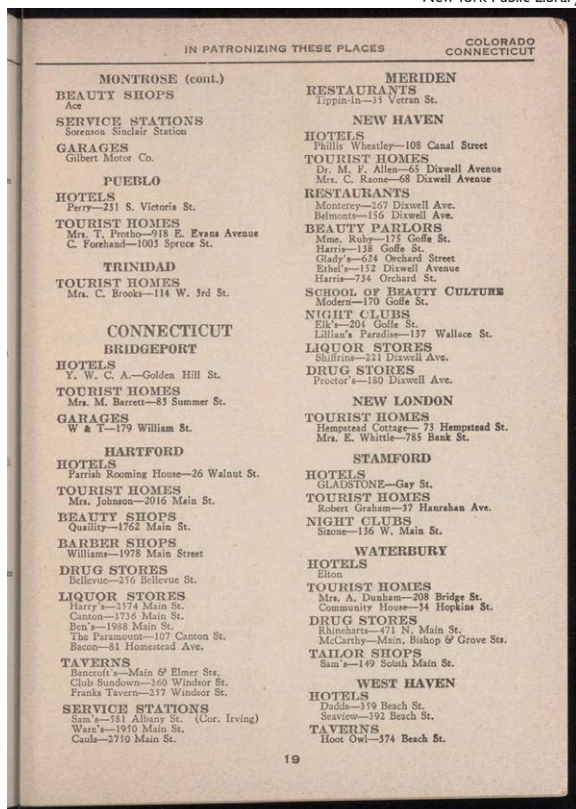
**Harris Beauty Parlor, 138 Goffe Street.  
Listed 1939-1950.**

The Harris Beauty Parlor was listed in the *Green Book* for eleven years, from 1939 to

*continued on next page*

The Harris Beauty Parlor in New Haven's Dixwell neighborhood was listed in the *Green Book* between 1939 and 1950. It is still a beauty parlor.

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1950. It was one of ten African American hair salons advertised in the travel guide and is one of only four still extant. The property continues the same use today, as God's Quality Hair Design.

The salon was housed in a small one-story wing added to an earlier house sometime between 1901 and 1923. According to New Haven city directories, Frances Harris, an African American woman from Virginia, ran the beauty shop when it first appeared in the *Green Book*. Eventually, Harris would relocate her business to 734 Orchard Street (see below).

Beginning in 1947, the parlor changed ownership and went by a number of different names, including "Lopes & Twyman" and the "Kay-Velle Beauty Shop." Both names referred to two women consistently listed in association with the salon throughout its *Green Book* years: Katherine E. Lopes and Marvella K. Twyman. Lopes was an African American woman who lived with her husband, Matthew Lopes, just up the street from the beauty parlor at 680 Orchard Street. Little could be found about Twyman.

In the 1960s, much of the Dixwell neighborhood was demolished under New Haven's urban renewal program, so it is surprising that 138 Goffe Street survived. Today it stands amid such urban renewal flagships as the Florence Virtue co-ops by John M. Johansen and the Dixwell Firehouse by Venturi & Rauch. Moreover, a current stylist there still recalls Harris, for whom her cousin worked at one time.

## **Harris Beauty Parlor, 734 Orchard Street. Listed 1948-1955. NR, Winchester Repeating Arms HD.**

This was a second location for Frances Harris and a later entry in the *Green Book* than the parlor at 138 Goffe Street (see above). Both Harris beauty parlors played prominent roles beyond accommodating travelers; spaces like these were significant sites of African American culture and socialization. The multi-family home was built in about 1890. Harris lived here with her husband Curtis, a railroad fireman who died in 1949, from about 1945 into the mid-1960s. It

appears that she offered beauty services in her home through at least 1960.

## **Mrs. S. Robinson Tourist Home, 54 Dixwell Avenue. Listed 1938-1947.**

The Mrs. S. Robinson tourist home provided accommodation to Black travelers between 1938 and 1947. During these years, the Dixwell neighborhood was home to a burgeoning Black community; while the home was listed in the *Green Book*, African Americans made up over fifty percent of the neighborhood's population. This was not Dixwell's only option for accommodations: three other tourist homes were listed on the same block. Guests staying at these tourist homes were able to access other services safe for Black travelers including churches, shops, beauty parlors, clubs, and restaurants.

Mattie Robinson moved north from Virginia with her husband, Samuel, a cook born in South Carolina. A widow in 1938, she may have opened her

home to travelers to support herself. Later, she worked briefly at Thomas Cunningham & Company, a cigar manufacturer on Summer Street, before remarrying and working as a maid.

By 1939, 54 Dixwell Avenue was associated with a new name, Harry Dixon, whose family lived there until at least 1947 running the tourist home. The house has undergone several alterations and remains a residence today.

## **Taft Hotel, 1000 Chapel Street. Listed 1963-64. NR, Chapel Street HD.**

The Taft Hotel was built by the New Haven Hotel Company and opened December 30, 1912. For its time, the Taft was a modern facility—twelve stories high, offering 450 rooms as well as shops, restaurants, bars and a large ballroom. Located in New Haven's downtown business district, it attracted prominent guests including notables visiting Yale and Broadway casts performing at the Schubert Theatre.

The Taft began to decline following World War II, as the rapid expansion of automobile travel reshaped American cities

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Listed as a tourist home beginning in 1938, Hempstead Cottage in New London already had ties to African American history going back to the 1840s

and businesses. Competing hotels sprang up adjacent to new highways such as the Wilbur Cross Parkway (opened 1950) and the Connecticut Turnpike (opened 1959). The Taft may have sought to buttress its shrinking business by appealing to African American travelers. By 1973, the Taft Hotel was forced to close; it was converted to apartments in 1978.

## NEW LONDON

**Hempstead Cottage, 73 Hempstead Street. Listed 1938-1950. NR, Hempstead HD; Freedom Trail.**

Ever since the abolitionist Savillion Haley built homes to sell to Black families in the 1840s, Hempstead Street was a center for African American life in New London. One of the Haley houses, Hempstead Cottage was first purchased by John Parkhurst, whose wife, Lavinia, was the sister of David Ruggles, a New York abolitionist. It was later owned by their grandson, the nationally renowned organist and music teacher William Herbert Bush.

Bush sold the home in 1926 to Sarah (Sadie) Dillon Harrison, Secretary of New London's Negro Welfare Council. She was also the Secretary of the New England Peoples Finance Corporation, co-founded in New London by her half-brother, Benjamin Tanner Johnson, the third Black graduate of Harvard Business School. The corporation's mission was to help the Black community with mortgages and car loans, which they were often denied at white-owned banks.

In 1930, Sadie Harrison and Edwin Henry Hackley published *Hackley and Harrison's Hotel and Apartment Guide for Colored Travelers*, the only known predecessor of the *Green Book*. She researched more than three hundred cities nationwide for her guide, all of which would later be included in the *Green Book*.

In the mid-1930s, Harrison rented Hempstead Cottage to the Linwood Bland family. It became the childhood home of Linwood Bland, Jr., the future president of the New London NAACP. Later occupants rented rooms to African American travelers, appearing in the *Green Book* from 1938 to 1950, one of several tourist homes in the Hempstead neighborhood.



The Robert Graham tourist home in Stamford was the only Connecticut site to be listed in every edition of the *Green Book*.

## STAMFORD

**Robert Graham's Tourist Home, 37 Hanrahan Street. Listed 1938-1961, 1963-64, 1966-67.**

Robert Graham's Tourist Home was the longest-standing Connecticut destination listed in the *Green Book*. It was the only tourist home listed in Stamford and, today, is the only extant *Green Book* site in the city. Robert and Rose Graham owned and lived at 37 Hanrahan Street from 1921 to 1965. In both the 1930 and 1940 censuses, the couple was listed alongside African American lodgers who represented a variety of occupations, including domestic servants, tailors, and chefs. Everyone living at 37 Hanrahan Street came from southern states, including Robert and Rose, who were from North Carolina—another example of the larger trend of African Americans moving to Stamford and other northern cities in search of work.

## WATERBURY

**Elton hotel, 16 West Main Street. Listed 1950-1961, 1964-64, 1966-67. NR, individual and Downtown Waterbury HD.**

Opened in 1904, the Elton Hotel is a Second Renaissance Revival style building located in downtown Waterbury. With

its grandiose design and central location facing the town green, the Elton soon became a landmark of Waterbury's social and industrial elite.

Beginning with the First Great Migration, African Americans increasingly came to Waterbury in search of better jobs. While work was available here, it often was limited to low-paying positions, and many establishments in the city remained segregated throughout the early 20th century. Initially, the Elton refused to employ or accommodate African Americans. Even Joe Louis, a famous African American boxer, was denied service during his reign as heavyweight champion sometime between 1937 and 1949.

However, the Elton changed its policy towards African Americans as civil rights activists and organizations in Waterbury began pushing for integration. On April 23, 1949, an article in the *New England Bulletin*, a Hartford-based African American newspaper, announced the desegregation of the Elton Hotel, in both employment and accommodation. The change was introduced by owner and manager Clyde Jennings; according to the *Bulletin*, "Mr. Jennings told us he had opened the way for Negroes to be

*continued on page 12*

## Briefly noted

### Farmington. ►

Town voters have approved a proposal to convert Farmington high school to municipal offices. The Georgian Revival school, opened in 1928, was the largest public work the town had undertaken at that time, incorporating modern facilities for domestic science and manual training, as well as an auditorium that could be used as a gymnasium. Plans call for using federal pandemic relief funding to renovate the building for the town clerk, tax assessor, tax collector, and registrar—uses that will bring the public into the building frequently. Later portions of the school, constructed or remodeled between 1952 and 2003, will be demolished. The project is part of a larger re-shaping of the town's municipal center, which also includes a new high school. Once the new school opens—scheduled for August 2024—work will begin on the historic building.



Farmington Public Schools

### Guilford. ►

Local preservationists are working to ensure the preservation of the Primus Hall house, a rare property owned by a free African American in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The structure stands in the way of needed improvements to Durham Road (Connecticut Route 77) and repairs to a dam and culverts at Lake Quonnipaug. According to research by town historian Joel Helander, Primus, a seaman originally from Branford, is believed to have built the house in about 1816 (as confirmed by dendrochronology) on land owned by Lot Benton; Primus bought the property in 1825. The small house, including a two-story addition, stands on a small triangle of land between Lake Drive and Hoop Pole Road; town plans call for simplifying the intersection by merging them into a single roadway. This would necessitate moving the structure; however, preservationists are urging a redesign to leave the tiny house on its original site, allowing it to remain eligible for historic designation. (Photograph, c.1915-1920)



the Dudley Foundation Collection

### Hartford. ►

American Express and the National Trust for Historic Preservation awarded a \$40,000 grant to Gather55, located in the former Hartford Rubber Works building (1912; NR). The grant is part of the Backing Historic Small Restaurants program, which provides funding for small or independently owned restaurants that contribute to their neighborhood's unique

history and identity. Gather55 is a program of Hands On Hartford, which offers food, health, and housing services to economically challenged residents. A Making Places grant from Preservation Connecticut provided the organization with the construction documents for converting the former tire warehouse into supportive housing that opened in 2016. The café offers meals on a pay-what-you-can basis.

Preservation Connecticut



Hands On Hartford



### Litchfield. ▲

A new future is in store for Arethusa Farm, the award-winning dairy, cattle breeding, and restaurant enterprise created by George Malkemus (who died in 2021) and Anthony Yurgaitas as an outgrowth of their determination to preserve 300 acres of agricultural land with its historic houses and outbuildings. Preservation Connecticut presented its Trustees' Award for Stewardship to the couple in 2018 to recognize their stewardship of natural, economic, and community resources—all rooted in the stewardship of historic and cultural resources. In April, Mr. Yurgaitas and Regional School District No. 6 announced the formation of the Arethusa Farm Foundation to own and manage 125 acres for immersive educational programs to give agriscience students hands-on exposure to farming practices and make a career in agriculture more tangible and accessible. The foundation is still being organized, but students from Wamogo Regional High School are already at work on the farm, preserving its agricultural character and heritage for a new generation.

### Stamford.

Hidden away on Fahey Street, the American Typesetting Company building is an imposing structure built of cast-stone blocks imitating rough-faced stone and ornamented with belt courses, decorative lintels, and a wide cornice. It was built in 1907 as part

*continued on page 19*

employed at the Elton and enjoy its accommodations because he felt that the race here, through its progress, had earned the right to work and live there.” Jennings later said that while most members of the community welcomed desegregation at the Elton, a few were opposed to allowing African Americans inside Waterbury’s most exclusive hotel. Nevertheless, the Elton maintained its desegregation policy and was featured in the *Green Book* beginning in 1950. Today, the Elton is an assisted living facility.

## **Pearl Street Neighborhood House, 34 Hopkins Street. Listed 1938-1964. Freedom Trail.**

The Pearl Street Neighborhood House was founded in 1923 as a community center for Waterbury’s African American population. For the first few decades of operation, the Neighborhood House was run by Leila Theodosia Plummer Alexander, who served as Social Director of the Pearl Street Community Organization. Under her direction, the Neighborhood House rapidly expanded, becoming the center of Waterbury’s African American community.

In 1927, the Pearl Street Neighborhood House relocated to a new building on the corner of Pearl and Hopkins streets, where Alexander lived in a small apartment upstairs. According to the Mattatuck Museum, “The Neighborhood house activated their community members into volunteering; fought for better housing, employment, and education; and created a safe space for African American community events, meetings, and entertainment. The Neighborhood House also served recent immigrants with a place to

For many years the Elton Hotel in Waterbury refused to rent to or even employ African Americans, but it changed its policy in 1949.

stay while getting on their feet.”

The Neighborhood House was listed as a tourist home in the *Green Book* from 1938 to 1964. As such, the facility offered the full range of activities and accommodations for African American travelers. This was particularly important for people passing through or visiting the city, as many hotels in Waterbury were segregated until the 1950s.

As a community center, the Neighborhood House was also a space for African American civil rights advocacy and activism. Alexander was a vocal advocate for positive interracial relations and community building. She sat on the Pearl Street Interracial Committee and served as chairman of the Pearl Street Community Civic League. In 1942, Alexander organized a Waterbury branch of the NAACP out of the Neighborhood House, and two years later the organization also affiliated itself with the Urban League.

In 1970, the Neighborhood House moved to a new facility on Columbia Boulevard, where it operated for about two decades until it was foreclosed and sold to the Albanian Cultural Center.

However, the former Neighborhood House building is still used for communal and cultural events under the Zion Baptist Church’s ownership.

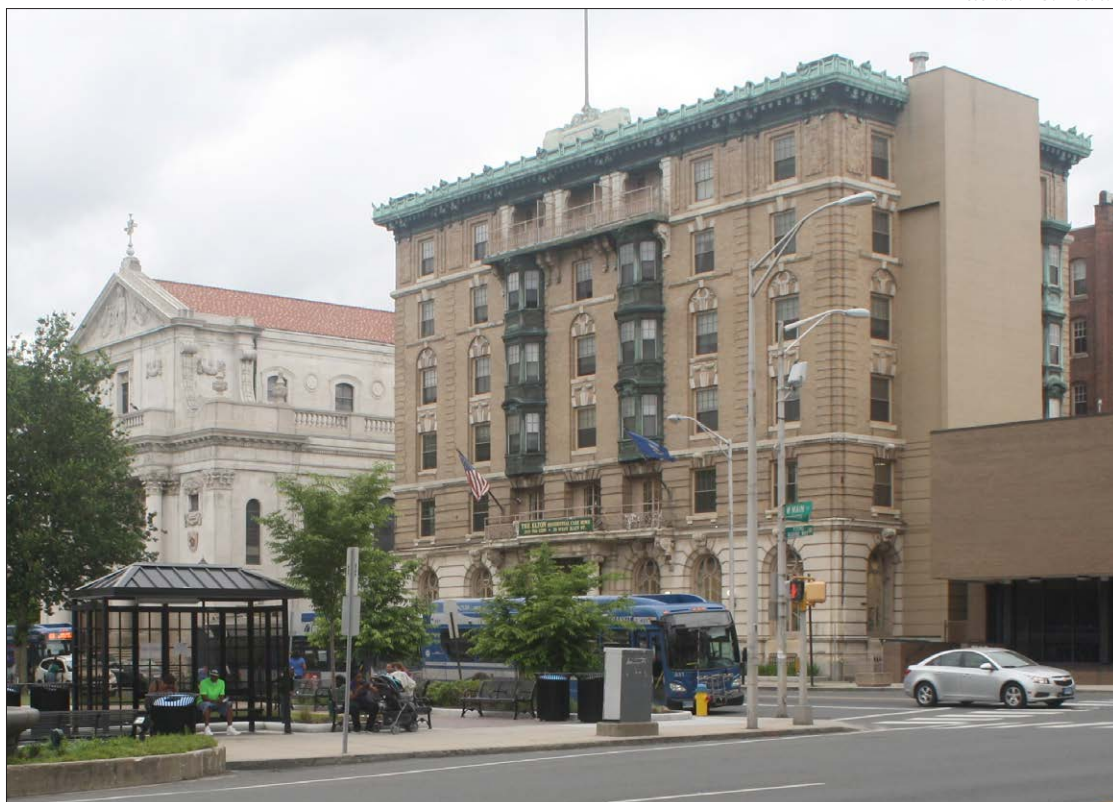
## **Mrs. E. McKinney tourist home, 25 Pearl Street. Listed 1938.**

The Mrs. E. McKinney tourist home, located at 25 Pearl Street, was listed in the *Green Book* in 1938. At this time, the Pearl Street neighborhood was home to Waterbury’s growing African American community and to three other tourist homes. For African American travelers, finding accommodation in a Black neighborhood provided a sense of security, as well as convenience, as guests staying at the Mrs. E. McKinney tourist home would have been able to access other facilities such as the Pearl Street Neighborhood House. Today the building is a multi-family home.

## **Learning from the Green Book**

Throughout its publication, the *Green Book* served as a vital guide for African American travelers in Connecticut. Unfortunately, its legacy has been severely

Preservation Connecticut



underrepresented in broader discussions of state and local history. It is important to acknowledge the people and communities that made it possible for African Americans to safely navigate the Jim Crow north, both as visitors and as residents.

These case studies shed light on themes that merit further investigation. For example, the stories of the Phyllis Wheatley Branch and Leila Theodosia Plummer Alexander raise questions regarding women's roles in shaping African American cultural experiences and influencing the civil rights movement in Connecticut. Additionally, the large number of sites listed in the *Green Book* that have been demolished warrants further discussion surrounding the racist and destructive processes that led to the disappearance of these significant African American cultural spaces. Overall, there is still much to learn about the role of the *Green Book* in shaping African American community, commerce, and culture in Connecticut. 🌱

For more on the *Green Book*, visit "The Architecture of The Negro Travelers' Green Book" at <https://community.village.virginia.edu/greenbooks/>.



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# HISTORIC PROPERTIES EXCHANGE

Threatened Buildings and Easement Properties Available — July/August 2023

Preservation easements protect the historic character of old buildings, structures and landscapes and require approval of proposed changes. When one of the many properties throughout the state on which Preservation Connecticut holds

easements is on the market, we may list it here. To learn how to safeguard your property for future generations through an easement, explore Stewardship on our website, [preservationct.org/steward](http://preservationct.org/steward), or contact Christopher Wigren, Deputy Director.

## 427 and 447 Broad Street, Bridgeport (1882 and 1987) \$3,100,000

One of the few remaining reminders of Little Liberia, the flourishing African American community in Bridgeport's South End. Neighbor to the Mary and Eliza Freeman Houses which recently received an African American Civil Rights grant from the National Park Service. Church was home to Walters Memorial AME Zion Church, a Little Liberia institution since 1835, until 2012 when it incurred major water damage from Super Storm Sandy. The congregation moved to the neighboring one-story, brick building and now is looking to relocate again. Total property is 1.03 acres including two buildings and six vacant lots. 427 Broad Street is 7,544 sq. ft.; 447 Broad Street is 5,624 sq. ft. The church is featured on the Connecticut Freedom Trail and listed on the State Register of Historic Places, which makes it eligible for preservation grants or historic rehabilitation tax credits.

Contact: Yasmina Delacruz, Keller Williams, 646-938-4879, [yasminadb@kw.com](mailto:yasminadb@kw.com)



## Penfield Reef Lighthouse (1874) Long Island Sound, Bridgeport

Opportunity to own Second Empire style lighthouse mounted on granite pier off the coast of Bridgeport. The property contains a 51-foot-tall octagonal lighthouse and a two-story, 1,568 square foot keeper's quarters. Includes boat dock. Weatherized and restored in 2015. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Being sold via online auction.

Contact: Sonia Allon-Singh, U.S. General Services Administration, 617-306-8615, [Sonia.allon-singh@gsa.gov](mailto:Sonia.allon-singh@gsa.gov)



### Deadline for the next issue is August 20, 2023

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

Neither advertisers nor Preservation Connecticut are responsible or liable for any misinformation, misprints, or typographical errors contained in Historic Properties Exchange. To list a property or learn about properties listed, contact Kristen Hopewood, at [khopewood@preservationct.org](mailto:khopewood@preservationct.org), or call (203) 562-6312.



### 81-119 West Main Street, Waterbury (1865, 1911, 1984)

Redevelopment opportunity prominently located on Waterbury Green. Five buildings, totaling 180,000 sq. ft., on 1.56 acres. Includes National Register listed John Kendrick House (1865), the last Italianate house remaining along the Waterbury Green, and the Lilley Building, part of the Downtown Waterbury National Historic District. Properties have history of renovations which make them unlikely to qualify for historic rehabilitation tax credits. In opportunity zone.

**Contact: Dan Shapiro, Kassin Sabbagh Realty, 646-928-5434, dshapiro@ksrny.com**

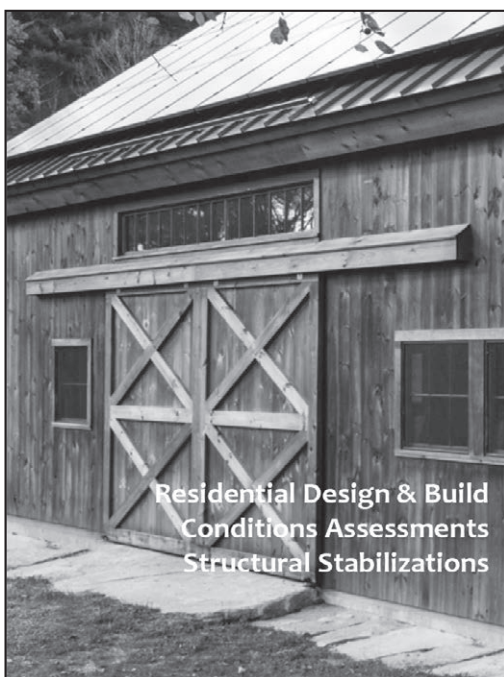
### 52 Norwood Street, Torrington (c. 1889) \$1,850,000

Redevelopment opportunity for historic industrial building constructed for the Eagle Bicycle Manufacturing Company and the New Process Nail Company (horseshoe nails). After initially flourishing, the increasing popularity of automobiles at the turn of the century caused Eagle Bicycle to shift its manufacturing focus to hardware, marine engines, and spark plugs. By 1901, Eagle Bicycle purchased New Process Nail Company and established its Progressive Manufacturing Company division to manufacture horseshoe nails. In 1905 the company completely abandoned manufacturing bicycles and shifted all production to machine screws, rivets, augers, and drill bits under the Progressive Manufacturing Company which was in operation until 1954. Later occupants include the Torrington Company and the Pheoll



Manufacturing Company which occupied the plant until 1982. The property is listed in Preservation Connecticut's *Mills: Making Places of Connecticut* industrial survey and is a candidate for listing on the State Register of Historic Places, which would make it eligible for State historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 80,388 sq. ft.; lot 4.61 acres.

**Contact: Marshall Cohen, Cohen Agency, 860-307-2594**



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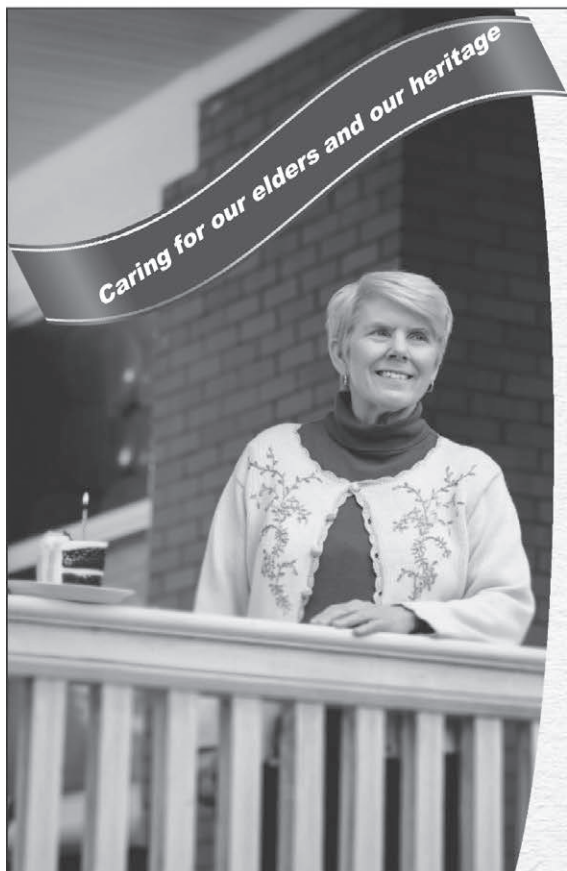


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## Upcoming Meetings

### Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

August 2, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. —Virtual meeting  
September 6, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. —Virtual Meeting

To participate, contact Jonathan Kinney  
(860) 500-2380; [Jonathan.Kinney@ct.gov](mailto:Jonathan.Kinney@ct.gov)

### State Historic Preservation Review Board

September 15, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. —Hybrid meeting

To participate, contact Jenny Scofield  
(860) 500-2343; [Jenny.Scofield@ct.gov](mailto:Jenny.Scofield@ct.gov)

For more information call (860) 500-2343 or visit  
[portal.ct.gov/DECD/Services/Historic-Preservation/About-the-State-Historic-Preservation-Office](http://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Services/Historic-Preservation/About-the-State-Historic-Preservation-Office)



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*Freeman houses, cont'd from page 20*

Born to a free family in Derby, the sisters moved to New York. After renting their houses for a few years, the Freemans moved to Bridgeport and lived in the houses until their deaths.

Since 2010 the houses have been owned by the Mary & Eliza Freeman Center, which has been working to restore the structures as places to teach the history of African Americans in Connecticut, to revitalize the South End neighborhood, and to facilitate the preservation and revitalization of other African American historic sites, as well as sites focused on Bridgeport's history. However, raising funds to restore the long-vacant houses has been difficult.

That effort got a boost in May, when the National Park Service granted \$750,000 to the Freeman Center. The grant comes from the Historic Preservation Fund's African American Civil Rights grant program, which funds preservation efforts at sites tied to the struggle of African Americans to gain equal rights.

With the NPS grant the Freeman Center will be able to begin renovating the Eliza Freeman house as a community Resilience Center, for educating and facilitating increased resiliency within the community. It will feature exhibits that focus on environmental literacy and justice, local/coastal



Walters Memorial AME Zion Church, founded in 1835, is selling its buildings near the Freeman houses.

history, property ownership and historic preservation in flood zones, health and the environment.

Even as the Freeman Center is at long last making progress to preserve the houses, and with them community history, the nearby church building of Walters Memorial AME Zion Church (1882), an institution that has served Little

Liberia since 1835, has been put up for sale. The building was damaged by floods in 2012, and the congregation has struggled to afford repairs, highlighting the ongoing disparities in preservation of historic places. 🌿

*The Freeman houses are located at 352-4 and 358-60 Main Street in Bridgeport. Visit the Freeman center at [freemancenterbpt.org](http://freemancenterbpt.org).*

*Around the State, cont'd from page 11*

of the new community of Springdale, established by developer Robert Kerr as an alternative to Stamford's densely industrialized South End. Kerr donated land to American Typesetting for a factory and technical school. That venture failed within a year, and the site passed on to other owners, most recently a lumberyard. It has recently been bought by a Toyota dealership, to use for parking and storage. Stamford's Historic Neighborhood Preservation program, along with Preservation Connecticut and the State Historic Preservation Office, introduced the idea of reuse and its potential benefits with a dealership representative. SHPO has also determined the building to be eligible for State Register listing. The owners appear intent on demolition and preservationists are exploring ways to continue the conversation.





In 2023, each issue of Preservation Connecticut News will look at one of the historic places named as "Connecticut Sites of Conscience" by Connecticut Humanities—places that highlight the legacy, relevance, and persistence of issues which have influenced our state and our nation, and which continue to drive public discourse.

For more information, visit  
<https://cthumanities.org/ct-soc/>.

## **"In Bridgeport the blacks may reign."** **Eliza and Mary Freeman houses,** **Bridgeport**

In spite of discrimination and the continued practice of enslavement, African Americans in some parts of the country were able to build thriving communities during the antebellum era. One of these was Little Liberia in Bridgeport, whose residents established churches, a school, a lending library, and social organizations, as well operating businesses including a resort hotel

that catered to a well-to-do African American clientele. They also supported abolition and enfranchisement and participated in the Underground Railroad and Colored Convention Movement.

In 1854, *Frederick Douglass' Paper* reported (using the language of the time), "The colored people of Bridgeport are in an improving condition—many of them are doing well, owning and living in their own snug and comfortable houses, and engaged in proper employments.... The best truckman in Bridgeport, is a colored man; the best barber, is a colored man; a very good grocery is kept by a colored man; and last, the most extensive and best fancy store in the town, is kept by a colored man..."

Douglass' correspondent, calling himself Ethiop, urged, "In Bridgeport the blacks may reign. This, then, is the spot for respectable colored people. Let them never play the tail part anywhere, when they can play the head."

Today, the only original structures surviving from Little Liberia are two houses built about 1848 for Eliza Freeman (1805-1862) and Mary Freeman (1815-1883), two sisters of African and Paugussett heritage.

*continued on page 19*

Michael Ong, courtesy of James Silvestro, Silvestro Design Operation

Architect's rendering for the restoration of the Freeman houses:  
a new grant will allow restoration of the Eliza Freeman house  
(circled) to begin.

