

January/February 2025 Volume XLVIII, No. 1

# PRESERVATION CONNECTICUT NEWS

The Lord Tavern in Norwich was PCT's first project.  
See more on page 20.

Thomas Hahn Photography

## Preservation Connecticut *50 years of stewardship*

Here's how Harlan Griswold, one of the founders, told the story:

*Because of my involvement with the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, the National Trust of Great Britain, and especially with the Connecticut Historical Commission (of which I have been a member since 1958), it had become very clear to me that while political support is most important in addressing quality of life issues, even more important are the leadership and support of the private sector. From that conviction came calls from me in 1974 to John Reynolds, a banker and preservationist in Middletown, and to Henry Miller, an architect in New Haven, to work on a state-wide ad hoc committee on state building codes standards relating to preservation.*

*This was followed in January 1975 by a meeting of concerned preservationists at the home of John and Frances Reynolds in Middletown. At the meeting it was decided to proceed with the formation of a state-wide trust for historic preservation...*

Thus began the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, operating today under the name Preservation Connecticut (PCT). With this issue, *Preservation Connecticut News* launches a yearlong series that will look back at the ways PCT has worked to preserve and enhance our state's historic places to improve life for its citizens, and also forward to where the preservation movement is headed in the 2020s and beyond.

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# Legislative outlook 2025

Connecticut's General Assembly opened its 2025 legislative session January 8. In December, Preservation Connecticut's lobbyist, Bill Malitsky of Focus Government Affairs, briefed the Board on the outlook for this year's session.

Following Connecticut's alternate-year schedule, this will be a long session, extending to June 4, with enactment of a biennial budget as its major focus. The state has enjoyed budget surpluses in recent years, and the outlook for revenue over the next biennium looks healthy, leading some legislators to propose new or increased funding for education, social services, town aid, and other areas.

However, budget controls passed in 2017 limit the State's ability to raise spending. This law set so-called 'guardrails' that limit most spending increases to five percent over the previous year. Any additional revenue must be used to pay down unfunded state pension obligations along with interest on borrowing and to build reserves.

In response, the Lamont administration recently cautioned that rising Medicaid, debt payments, and other fixed costs would make it impossible for the state to increase

funding for other programs. In fact, the governor charged state agencies to *reduce* spending by five percent in their 2025-2027 budget requests. Leaders in the Senate want to cut back the guardrails, but in the House there is less support for significant changes. Any modification of the guardrails is likely to be modest in scope and directed to social programs.

With revenue a major issue, the Community Investment Act, which provides a dedicated funding stream for historic preservation (including PCT)—along with affordable housing, farmland protection, open space acquisition—could come under scrutiny. PCT and related organizations will be vigilant to protect that program, which is important both for the amount of money that it channels to valuable programs and for the funding stability that allows agencies to plan beyond the two-year budget.

The long session also allows more time for legislators to propose bills that could affect state programs. While it is impossible to know what will come up before the session gets underway, it is certain that housing will continue to be a major focus of attention, and historic properties have

the potential to be a significant part of the housing equation. Legislation could either encourage careful reuse of historic buildings or encourage mindless violation of historic character in the interests of maximizing units created—and, perhaps, profits to developers.

One carryover from the 2024 session is the act that modified the State Historic Preservation Office's procedures for reviewing state-funded or state-permitted projects for their effect on historic resources. While the most harmful provision, a buyout to avoid the review process altogether, was deleted, the act still weakens the state's long held policy to avoid harming historic resources through its programs. Preservationists reacted to the act with the intention to pursue actions to modify it; however, lobbyists advise that it would be wisest to wait longer and see how the enacted changes actually affect historic places before pursuing changes.

Preservation Connecticut with its lobbyists will follow the legislative session closely; for updates check our website and social media, as well as those of Connecticut Preservation Action, the statewide lobbying organization for historic preservation. 🌿

This image of the Capitol was published in 1887 in a promotional book by the Travelers Insurance Company.



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Happy 2025!** This year promises to be a particularly exciting one, as **Preservation Connecticut celebrates its fiftieth anniversary.** There have been many joys and sorrows in the half-century since Barbara Delaney, Harlan Griswold, and John Reynolds incorporated the statewide organization—then known as the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation—and obtained a charter from the General Assembly making us officially the State Historic Preservation Office's private nonprofit partner.

We are commemorating this history through a series of special events highlighting **50 places where the Connecticut Trust/Preservation Connecticut made a difference.** You'll find them in a variety of formats: here in *Preservation Connecticut News* or on our social media, or through events planned for our members and the public. We'll start the celebrations where it all began—at the State Capitol. Join us on **February 20** at the Connecticut Legislative Office Building for a meet and greet and celebratory gathering.

The anniversary also gives us an opportunity to think about our future, and the future of historic preservation in Connecticut. To help us meet the future,

PCT's board adopted a new five-year **strategic plan** in December. The plan is the product of a months-long process that involved board and staff members with guidance from preservation consultant Susan West Montgomery. The main **goals** remain the same as in the last plan—make a big impact, engage and inspire, and strengthen the organization—but the new plan includes a new mission statement and identifies **five strategic priorities** to guide our implementation of the plan goals:

- Use the Washington Park Community Preservation Project as model/blueprint for how to grow PCT's capacity to use preservation to address larger-scale community challenges and to build a more sustainable organization.
- Proactively identify future opportunities to use historic preservation to address contemporary challenges and expand the reach and impact of PCT.
- Expand PCT's criteria, definitions, and approaches to be better positioned to engage and serve all communities and all histories and to make the benefits of historic preservation accessible to all.
- Plan for staff realignment and expansion to meet the growing needs of the

organization and develop a board and staff recruitment and retention plan.

- Build a fundraising plan around these strategic priorities and the 50th anniversary.

Helping us carry out these goals will be PCT's our newest staff member, **Circuit Rider Fellow Andrea Floersheimer**, who joined us in December. Andrea is working on a variety of projects, including our Washington Park Community Preservation project in Bridgeport. She is a dedicated heritage management and community engagement professional with a passion for uplifting diverse histories. Andrea holds a BA in History from Columbia University and brings over four years of experience working in museum, archival and cultural settings with a strong focus on project management and community outreach. Andrea plans to pursue an M.S. in Historic Preservation after her fellowship with Preservation Connecticut. In her new position, Andrea will advance Preservation Connecticut's programs by supporting on-site technical assistance and guidance to stakeholders involved in historic preservation around the state.

Please join us this year as we continue our efforts to widen our preservation audience and work with Connecticut communities to preserve, protect, and promote the historic places which embody the stories of our shared past and enrich our shared future.

—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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## Upcoming Meetings

### Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

February 5, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.  
March 5, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.

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

### State Historic Preservation Review Board

March 21, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.

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

Meetings are hybrid meetings, held in person at the State Historic Preservation Office, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

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)



# Preservation Connecticut: *50 years of stewardship*

Charles T. Clark

**A**s it developed in the 1960s the American historic preservation movement has relied on the parallel advocacy work of public and private entities. Government agencies embody the conviction that caring for historic places is a public value; they are set up to be stable and predictable, but not necessarily quick to act or easily adaptable. Private organizations, on the other hand, can complement official actions through on-the-ground outreach to local communities. For fifty years, Connecticut's private statewide preservation organization has been the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, now doing business as Preservation Connecticut.

The Connecticut Trust traces its beginnings to the 1970s, when leaders of the Connecticut Historical Commission, the forerunner to today's State Historic Preservation Office, conceived of a private partner for that government agency. The Commission's chair, Harlan H. Griswold of Woodbury, gathered a group of likeminded collaborators, and on February 12, 1975, the Board of Trustees held its first meeting. Later that year, the General Assembly passed legislation which formally chartered the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation "to stimulate citizens throughout the private sector to preserve, restore and reuse historic architecturally significant buildings and sites... so that present and future generations may live within and enjoy our common heritage." (For the sake of simplicity, the remainder of this article will simply say 'Preservation Connecticut,' or 'PCT')

The founders organized PCT to operate in three primary areas which have remained remarkably constant for five decades: real estate, advocacy and technical service, and education.

## Real estate programs

Preservation is about real estate, which can be bought and sold. A primary reason for founding Preservation



In an early project, the Connecticut Trust provided funding to prevent demolition of Lincoln House in Waterbury.

C. Wigren



Dorothy Church Zaring donated a preservation easement in 1992 to protect buildings and farmland on her family property in Ashford, the Church Farm.

Connecticut was to establish a revolving fund—that is, by buying an endangered property, selling it, and using the proceeds to buy the next property—that could operate more nimbly than a state agency and draw on private funding sources.

Raising funds to buy often-expensive Connecticut real estate was not easy, and the investments were inherently risky, but several achieved success. In one of PCT's earliest projects, it made a grant in 1977 to avert the demolition of Lincoln House (1916)





In 1982, PCT provided technical assistance, including design renderings, for façade restoration of downtown commercial buildings in Torrington, including the Allen Building (1930).



Lebanon implemented a Village District zone and adopted design guidelines and structure with funding from a Vibrant Communities Initiative grant from Preservation Connecticut.

in Waterbury, designed by Cass Gilbert for local social services agencies. A loan guarantee in 1984 helped the Trust for Public Land buy part of Impressionist artist J. Alden Weir's farm in Wilton, which eventually became Connecticut's first National Historic Site.

Real estate activities got a boost when the State allocated \$500,000 for the revolving fund, to be matched by private donations.

Although the full match was never raised, several successful projects ensued beginning in 1985. Loans made possible the rehabilitation of houses in Bridgeport, East Haddam, and New Haven, among other places, and in Darien the Trust bought the Benjamin Weed house (1785), to avert its destruction. But in the real estate downturn of the early 1990s several projects lost money, and with no new infusions of

capital the revolving fund had to be shut down.

The Trust revived the revolving fund approach in the 2010s, with encouragement and seed money from The 1772 Foundation. Soon, however, it became apparent that a more effective approach was to use the expertise of a professional community development fund, Capital for Change, which for several years provided loan management while PCT identified and evaluated projects.

Another real estate tool has been a preservation easement program, which reaches private agreements with owners who promise to maintain their historic properties and give Preservation Connecticut the power to approve alterations. As of 2025, PCT holds easements on forty properties across the state, ranging from Colonial farmhouses to 19<sup>th</sup>-century worker housing to 20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial buildings in rural, village, and urban settings. In addition to buildings, some easements protect landscapes, such as the fields and woodlands that provide the historic setting for the Church Farm in Ashford.

### Advocacy and technical assistance

From the beginning, Preservation Connecticut has fielded calls from property owners, community groups, municipal officials, and others seeking technical and strategic assistance for an ever-widening array of resources. In 1982, PCT recommended redevelopment strategies for the City of Torrington and prepared façade restoration plans for 18 Victorian and Art Deco commercial buildings, to stimulate private investment.

Since 2001 Preservation Connecticut has extended its reach to every corner of Connecticut through field service staff, called Circuit Riders. Initially a partnership with the National Trust, and now with the State Historic Preservation Office, the Circuit Rider program sends preservation professionals into the field to provide advice, information about resources and strategy, and technical expertise. The program began with a single Circuit Rider working in the

*continued on next page*



Hartford area and quickly expanded to cover the whole state, adding a second, and third, and then a fourth, Circuit Rider.

Offering expertise in history, planning, development, and archaeology, the Circuit Riders help local citizens evaluate sites' historic significance, identify technical and financial resources for preservation, and support preservation and reuse.

In the early 2000s, Circuit Riders and other PCT staff members worked with the town historic district commission, the property owner, and developers to avert demolition of the Comstock, Ferre seed company barns in the center of Old Wethersfield. Thanks to measured drawings, suggestions for reuse, and information about state and federal tax credits, a new developer eventually bought the barns and successfully renovated them.

Circuit Riders also helped the City of Hartford enact its municipal preservation ordinance (the first in the state), in 2005, and Preservation Connecticut promoted statewide enabling legislation which has allowed other municipalities to adopt similar measures.

Passage of the Community Investment Act in 2005 (after a multi-year lobbying effort by Preservation Connecticut and many allies) provided more stable funding for historic preservation, affordable housing, open space acquisition, and farmland protection. PCT receives an annual appropriation through the act; in addition, it has benefited from grants to fund surveys as well as re-granting programs that enhanced the effectiveness of the Circuit Rider program.

Preservation Connecticut's grants have funded organizational preservation planning and feasibility studies, community revitalization, and small restoration projects—most recently targeted to houses of worship. In addition, PCT administers restoration grants for The 1772 Foundation. To increase grants' effectiveness, the Circuit Riders work closely with applicants to define realistic projects and craft successful applications.



Circuit Riders and other staff members helped find a redevelopment solution for the Comstock Ferre seed company barns in Wethersfield (seen before renovation).

Spencer A. Sloan Photography



Preservation Connecticut joined the University of Connecticut School of Law to present "Historic & Green: A New Climate Agenda" in 2020.

## Education and awareness

Educational programs have been key to making the case for preservation. Since 1978 the newsletter, now called *Preservation Connecticut News*, has reported on preservation activities throughout the state and published special issues dedicated to topics such as archaeology, landscape preservation, outdoor sculpture, and African American and Native American history.

Other publications to educate preservationists have been *Handbook of Historic Preservation Law* (1984), *How to Care for Your Old House* (1987), and *Handbook for Historic District Commissions and*

*Historic Property Commissions in Connecticut* (2010). In 2018, PCT published *Connecticut Architecture: Stories of 100 Places*. The first book to cover Connecticut's built environment on a statewide basis, it is intended to support preservation in the state by expanding knowledge of and appreciation for its architectural heritage.

Public programs have expanded the preservation network and provided information on emerging issues. In the 1990s, as the preservation movement nationwide increasingly focused on planning topics, Preservation Connecticut presented a series of conferences and workshops on sprawl, road design compatible with historic settings, and



Websites such as TownGreens.com make PCT's survey projects widely available for preservation planning.

Wayne Fleming



The Harlan Griswold award, presented jointly by PCT and the State Historic Preservation Office, honors one of PCT's founders. In 1994 the award went to Nancy Campbell, preservationist at the local, state, and national levels (seen here with Mrs. Griswold).

preservation in the suburbs. PCT also has offered training for real estate agents and local historic district commissioners.

Efforts to identify historic places began with surveys of historic theaters and New Haven's Dwight neighborhood in the 1980s. In the 1990s, a survey of town greens grew out of the interest in preservation planning; in 2001, it was made available to the public through a website, [towngreens.com](http://towngreens.com). This established a pattern that would be repeated with surveys and websites for barns, industrial sites, sites associated with 20<sup>th</sup>-century

artists and writers, and places listed in the Green Book guides for African American travelers (the last linked to a nationwide website).

To recognize significant preservation achievements and inspire others, Preservation Connecticut offers preservation awards. Over the years, the program has embraced a wide range of rehabilitation and adaptive use projects, as well as honoring preservation professionals and young preservation-

ists. In partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office, PCT recognizes particularly significant preservation accomplishments through an award named for Harlan Griswold. Beginning in 2019, another joint award, with the Connecticut chapter of the American Institute of

Architects, honors architectural excellence in preservation work.

### Into our sixth decade

As it completes its first half-century of service, Preservation Connecticut seeks to strengthen its message that historic places are valuable not only in their own right, but as expressions of identity, engines of economic renewal, resources to be conserved, sustainable alternatives to new construction, and catalysts for stronger communities.

In its most recent strategic plan, for 2025-2030, Preservation Connecticut's board and staff have recommitted to making an impact, engaging and inspiring fellow citizens, and strengthening our organization to enable us to continue our advocacy to 'preserve, restore and reuse historic architecturally significant buildings and sites.' 🌿

*For more on Preservation Connecticut's history, see the timeline published in Preservation Connecticut News, July/August 2020 and available online at [preservationct.org/newsletter-gallery](http://preservationct.org/newsletter-gallery).*

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The lower layers of stone at Long Wharf date from William Lanson's extension of the pier.

National Register of Historic Places, Daryn Reyman-Lock and Stacey Vairo



Cedar Grove cemetery, in New London, offers a peaceful landscape.

**F**our Connecticut sites—a pier, a cemetery, and two modernist houses—were recently added to the National Register of Historic Places.

For centuries, **Long Wharf pier** played a central role in New Haven's economic development. Its history dates back to 1663, when Samuel Bache built a wharf that would extend far enough into the harbor for ocean-going vessels to unload their cargo without needing intermediary smaller boats. Over the following decades the wharf was added to several times to accommodate growth in trade.

The most notable expansion came in 1810, after years of silt deposited in the harbor increasingly hampered operations, leading the company that managed the wharf to extend it by 1,500 feet. They awarded the contract to William Lanson (c.1781-1851), a Black real estate developer and builder. Just how Lanson transported his stone and constructed the pier in the waters of the harbor is unknown, but the result was an engineering landmark unusual among piers at the time for its use of cut stone. Lanson's stonework still can be seen at low tide, underneath later concrete and riprap.

The pier continued to serve New Haven's economy, handling a wide array of goods coming into or leaving the port. By the 1870s, though, it had been eclipsed by wharves more conveniently sited to railroad lines. In 1890 the New York, New Haven,

and Hartford Railroad bought the wharf, and traffic decreased dramatically.

Today, it serves primarily as a berthing site for the replica of the *Amistad* slave ship, which docked there in 1839.

**Cedar Grove cemetery** was established on New London's western edge in 1851 and eventually grew to encompass approximately 76 acres. Its present appearance reflects the original layout as well as two major expansions characterized by changing ideas of cemetery design.

The original section was planned in the then-current Rural Cemetery mode by Horatio Stone (1808-1875), a physician, sculptor, and landscape designer from New York City. Stone outlined a naturalistic yet highly controlled landscape incorporating winding carriage roads and pathways, native and specimen plantings, and carefully planned views—intended as a pleasant setting for people to visit and remember loved ones.

New sections added in the 1890s reflected the newer Landscape Lawn plan, which downplayed individual plots in favor of a more open and uniform landscape which needed less intensive maintenance.

In a third phase of development, the Olmsted Brothers landscape firm provided plans for new sections between 1923 and 1960. Carried out under the supervision of partner Edward C.

Whiting (1881-1962), the work included details of plot layout, as well as roadway and planting designs.

In addition to its layout and plantings, Cedar Grove is notable for its collection of funerary art in various styles and for buildings and structures such as walls, fences, and gateways that contribute to its landscape.

Two houses, both in the town of Weston, were listed under the Mid-Twentieth Century Modern Residential Architecture in Connecticut, 1930-1979 Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). The MPDF is an umbrella document that provides the context for listing a large number of resources without repeating the same background information for each one. While both houses are covered by the MPDF, they are very different in design and represent different aspects of the Modern Movement.

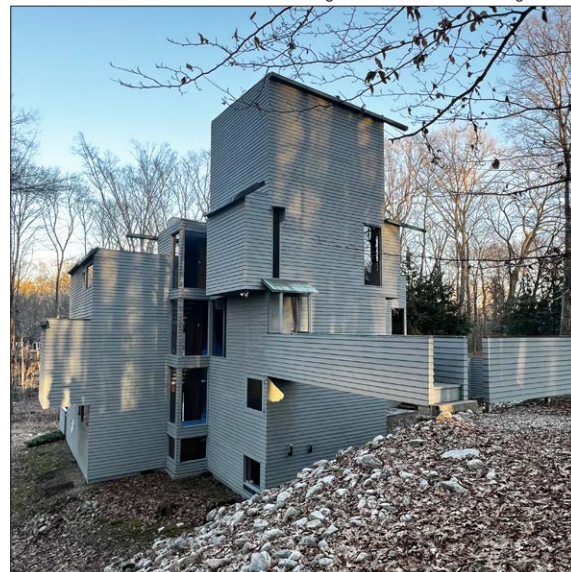
Built in 1955, with an addition in 1960, the **Morris and Rose Greenwald house** is one of only three single-family houses in the United States designed by the master architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969). Born in Germany, Mies succeeded Walter Gropius as director of the Bauhaus School before it was shut down by the Nazis in 1933. Mies fled to Chicago, where he designed several projects for developer Herbert Greenwald. Herbert Greenwald's brother, Morris, with his wife, Rose, commissioned the Weston house.

The Greenwald house is an example of the Miesian ideal: a simple rectangular pavilion, with an exposed steel frame, brick and glass





The Greenwald house, in Weston, is a rare residential commission by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe



The stepped towers of the Wasserman house, in Weston, reflect its complex interior arrangement.

walls, and an open plan creating a continuous flowing space, all executed with meticulous attention to details and craftsmanship. The frame, with its vertical steel mullions, closely resembles other works by Mies such as the 860-880 Lakeshore Drive apartments in Chicago (1949-1951).

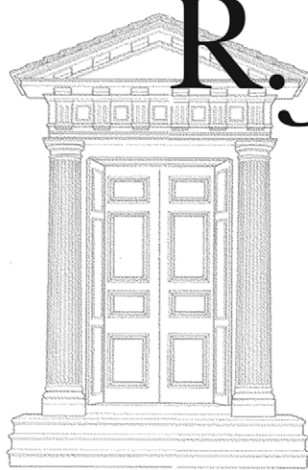
An addition by Mies in 1960 provided expanded kitchen and service areas. Further additions, designed by architect Peter Gluck, include separate pool and guest houses (1982) and master bedroom wing and interior renovation of the original house (1989). These alterations repeat the materials and proportions of the original design while differing in detail. Importantly, the house retains its relationship to the landscape, sitting on a raised podium with views toward the Saugatuck River.

Also in Weston, the **Harvey and Rhoda Wasserman house** was completed in 1964. Designed by the English-born architect John Fowler (1934-1975), the house floats above its steeply sloping site. In contrast to the simple rectangle and open interior of the Greenwald house, the Wasserman house divides public and private spaces among a multiplicity of levels stacked around a central stair that rises six half-levels from a playroom at the bottom to the parents' bedroom and rooftop terrace at the top, providing along the way a progression of vistas to the surrounding wooded landscape. The design is thought to have been influenced by Paul Rudolph's Art and Architecture building at Yale (completed in 1963), which Fowler worked on while an employee in Rudolph's office.

Other features of the house are hinged panels that reveal screened ventilation openings, elongated copper rain spouts that throw water away from the flat roofs, and lighting that emphasizes the house's connection to the landscape.

The Wasserman house earned awards

from the New England Regional Council of the American Institute of Architects and the Connecticut Society of Architects and was featured in several national architectural journals as well as in "Three Hundred Years of Connecticut Architecture," at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, in 1970. 🌿



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## Briefly noted

### Greenwich.

Town officials enacted planning measures to encourage preservation of two historic areas in November. A mile-long stretch of Palmer Hill Road was designated as a scenic roadway, and a village district overlay zone was created for Old Greenwich. According to promoters, Palmer Hill Road offers scenic views, is bordered by mature trees and stone walls, and passes by historic sites including a stone bridge built across the Mianus River in 1909. The new scenic road designation requires public notice for any new construction, along with approval by the town Planning & Zoning Commission. The village district overlay on the commercial district along Sound Beach Avenue in Old Greenwich will provide additional review to protect the area's distinctive appearance, including input from the town Architectural Review Committee, for new development projects. P&Z chairwoman Margarita Alban told the Greenwich Time, "We are not adding layers of complexity to an application. But what we're adding is, if you will, more thoughtfulness."

### Hartford. ►

Liberty Christian Center rededicated its restored steeple in November. Originally named Horace Bushnell Congregational Church (1913; NR), the building and its congregation provide a variety of crucial services to Hartford's North End, but that work was threatened by the tower's deterioration, visible in peeling paint and falling pieces. After the Hartford Preservation Alliance listed the church as one of the city's ten most endangered properties, in 2022, Speaker of the House Matt Ritter (D-Hartford) started the process that led to a \$1 million state bond grant. For the Rev. Corey James, the church's senior pastor, the restored steeple is a focal point for the neighborhood and "a reminder of hope." Staff from Preservation Connecticut attended the event, along with representatives from the Hartford Preservation Alliance, Cirrus Structural Engineering, Valley Restoration LLC, and The Architects, all of whom worked on the project.

### Manchester. ►

The Case Mountain cabin was open to the public in early December for the first time. Built in 1917 for Carol Maude Case Dennison, the rustic log cabin is part of the Case Brothers National Register district. The Town of Manchester bought the property in 2006, and in 2020 floated a proposal to demolish the neglected cabin. Preservationists convinced the Town not to demolish it and established Case Mountain Cabin, Inc., to help raise funds and oversee restoration. The organization signed a five-year lease with the Town in early summer and started work to clean up and stabilize the building, working with volunteers and local contractors. Although additional work remains, visitors marveled at the chestnut-log construction, the two-story great room lined with balconies, and an original wooden chandelier.

Preservation CT



Case Mountain Cabin, Inc.





Andre Bennatan



## ◀ Mansfield.

The Mansfield General Store has reopened after renovation. Constructed in 1886 for Charles Weeks, the building has been a central element of Mansfield Center ever since, housing a series of commercial enterprises as well as the local post office. The store's importance is reflected in its inclusion in the Mansfield Center National Register district. In 2017, when the town building official condemned the store's trademark two-story porch as unsafe, local preservationists along with the State Historic Preservation Office and PCT (then known as the Connecticut Trust) Circuit Riders commissioned an engineering report that showed the porch to be reparable, and the then-owners were able to obtain a building permit just minutes before the town deadline. Now, the building has a new owner, Andre Bennatan, and has undergone a complete renovation by contractor KBMS Enterprises. It reopened in November with three tenants, Lisa's Chocolates 'n Gifts, Line Art Studio, and Kiwami Triathlon. At a ribbon cutting in November, town manager Ryan Aylesworth said, "This beautifully restored building isn't just a nod to our past; it's a cornerstone for future growth."

ConnecticutMills.org



## Middlebury. ▲

The State Historic Preservation Review Board voted in December not to recommend listing the Timex headquarters building on the National Register. The building, opened in 2001, is slated to be demolished for a warehouse distribution center. It was nominated to the Register by Save Historic Middlebury, Inc., a newly founded historic preservation organization opposed to the distribution center.

The headquarters incorporated all-glass walls providing views to its scenic hilltop location, energy efficiency features that were current or new at the time, and a whole-building solar calendar expressive of Timex's watchmaking business. Although Review Board members (including PCT deputy director Christopher Wigren) found the building to be architecturally interesting, they concluded that the nomination

did not adequately demonstrate the exceptional significance required to list buildings less than 50 years old. PCT Circuit Rider Stacey Vairo has been working with Save Historic Middlebury to develop preservation measures that the town might adopt to protect its historic resources ahead of future development proposals.

*continued on next page*



### New Haven. ►

The New Haven Preservation Trust is calling on City officials to slow down on demolishing the building at 36 River Street. Originally a depot for the Fair Haven and Westville Railroad containing sections built about 1888 and 1910, with later additions, it is part of PCT's Making Places inventory and sits near the River Street National Register district. The building suffered a fire in October 2024, and the City building inspector has issued an order to demolish it as unsafe. In a letter to Mayor Justin Elicker, Sara Tisdale, the NHPT's preservation services officer, writes, "We suggest that the City call on an experienced preservation engineer, as it has done in the past, to review the condition of this building. Please refer to Section 117.1 of the International Existing Building Code, which gives the Code Official the authority to order an alternative to demolition *"if such structure is capable of being made safe by repairs...."*" The text notes that the Code Official should carefully document the condition of the structure prior to issuing a demolition order." She notes that several buildings in the vicinity have recently been lost to "neglect and an aggressive use of demolition" and urges the city to make a priority of preserving as much as possible of the building.



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### Norwich. ►

The City Council voted in December to buy the former Chelsea Savings Bank (1909-1911; NR) to be used as a new police station. Located in the narrow angle of Main and Cliff streets, the Neoclassical-style stone building with its monumental Ionic columns creates a visual terminus for Franklin Square, a prominent downtown space. The building was valued at \$1.4 million, but the City negotiated a purchase price of \$800,000, which includes two nearby parking lots. Renovation, including a large addition and conversion of the banking lobby to a community meeting space, is estimated at \$49 million. City officials hope to apply for state aid to cover two-thirds of that amount. Two other sites were considered but would have been more expensive. Voters will have a chance to approve the renovation in a referendum.



Preservation Connecticut

### Waterford.

Developer Mark Steiner's lawsuit to prevent the demolition of Seaside Sanatorium was dismissed on December 24 by Judge Amir Shaikh, who ruled that the State's completion of an Environmental Impact Evaluation made the plan to demolish the historic buildings reasonable. The March issue of *Preservation Connecticut News* will provide analysis of the decision.



# Connecticut Preservation Awards 2025

courtesy of Orion Newall

**N**ominations are open for the 2025 Connecticut Preservation Awards, presented by Preservation Connecticut to recognize achievements in revitalizing historic places to enhance the quality of life for the people of Connecticut.

**Awards of Merit** honor outstanding efforts in the preservation and enhancement of historic places, with the goal of inspiring others to take similar action—**PARTICULARLY** projects that:

- bring **new life to distressed historic places**;
- revitalize sites associated with the history of **minority or over-looked communities**;
- contribute to **sustainability**—environmental, economic, or social; or
- develop innovative **new perspectives or methods** to historic preservation

**The Mimi Findlay Award for Young Preservationists** recognizes individuals aged 35 or younger, or groups whose members are predominantly 35 or younger; who have demonstrated achievement in preservation of historic places.

Nominations are due by 4:00 p.m., **Friday, February 7, 2025**. Awards will be presented Thursday, May 8, 2025, at the New Haven Country Club in Hamden.

Find instructions and a nomination form at [preservationct.org/nominate](https://preservationct.org/nominate). There is no fee to submit nominations. For more information, call Christopher Wigren at (203) 562-6312 or email [cwigren@preservationCT.org](mailto:cwigren@preservationCT.org). 🌿



Orion Newall received the Mimi Findlay award for young preservationists in 2024 for his restoration of an historic boxcar and his work to preserve New England railroad history.



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# HISTORIC PROPERTIES EXCHANGE

Threatened Buildings and Easement Properties Available — January/February 2025

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.

## 52 Norwood Street, Torrington (c.1889)

**\$1,650,000**

Redevelopment opportunity of 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 continued 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, which identifies the complex as a candidate for listing on the State Register of Historic Places. If listed, it would be eligible for State historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 80,388 sq. ft.; lot 4.61 acres.

Contact: Michael Soleimani, SAB Capital, 646-809-8833



## 33 Main Street, Plainfield (c.1847)

**\$295,000**

Former Central Village Congregational Church, founded in 1847 by the North Plainfield Ecclesiastical Society, an offshoot of the First Congregational Church of Plainfield. The parish closed in November 2024 due to limited resources and aging members. Church is mixture of Greek Revival and Italianate architecture and includes coffered ceilings and stained-glass windows, basement has full kitchen and community space. Located in Central Village



National Register Historic District which makes eligible for State or Federal historic rehabilitation tax credits or, for nonprofit owners, historic rehabilitation grants. Building area: 2,728 sq.ft.; 0.29 acres.

Contact: Cary Marcoux, RE/MAX Bell Park Realty, [carymarcouxsells@gmail.com](mailto:carymarcouxsells@gmail.com)





## 275 Warren Street, Bridgeport (1885, c.1905, c.1915, c.1920, c.1930, c.1960)

Historic Bassick Co. mill available in Bridgeport. Built for Burns Silver Company which manufactured furniture and cabinet hardware. The company reorganized in 1909 as Burns and Bassick Company and expanded manufacturing to include brass and bronze castings. Firm continued to grow by acquiring other caster manufactures and consolidated all businesses as Bassick Company in 1917. Stewart-Warner Corp of Chicago acquired Bassick Co. in 1923, and operations continued at Bridgeport site until 1962. The property is listed in Preservation Connecticut's *Mills: Making Places of Connecticut* industrial survey, which identifies the complex as a candidate for listing on the State Register of Historic Places. If listed, it would be eligible for State historic rehabilitation tax credits. 100,000 sq.ft.; 1.45 acres. In Opportunity Zone.

**Contact: Bruce Wettstein, Vidal/Wettstein LLC,  
203-226-7101, [bruce@vidalwettstein.com](mailto:bruce@vidalwettstein.com)**



## Linus Plimpton House 847 Asylum Avenue, Hartford (1863, 1880) \$799,900

Opportunity not to be missed: newly rehabbed, three-family Romanesque Revival house available in Hartford. Once owned by local envelope manufacturer, Linus Plimpton, the house was restored by the Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (NINA) as part of a neighborhood revitalization project. Includes original stained glass and woodwork, along with hand painted ceilings. Being sold as owner occupied three-family house; main house includes three-floors and four bedrooms. Located in Asylum Hill National Register District. Totals 7,347 sq. ft.; on 0.34 acres.

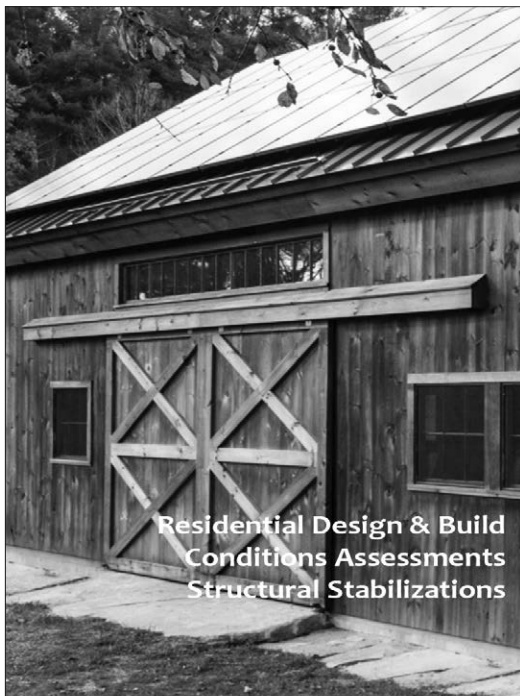
**Contact: Ellen Sebastian, William Pitt | Sotheby's,  
860-930-8407, [esebastian@wpsir.com](mailto:esebastian@wpsir.com)**

### Deadline for the next issue is February 20, 2025

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.





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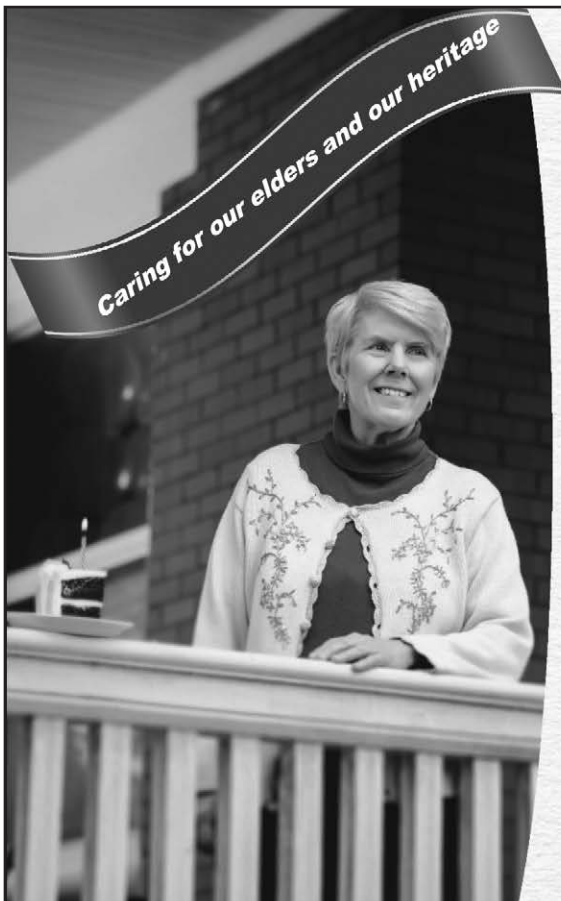
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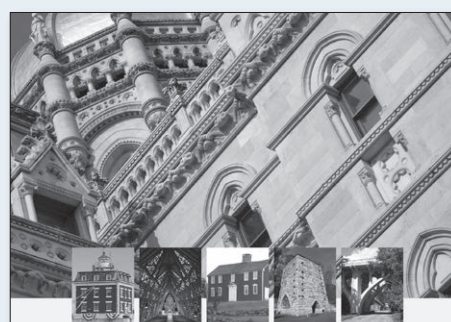
## EDWARD F. GERBER'S LEGACY

"My entire life, I've been passionate about preserving historic buildings and places. I felt compelled to join Preservation Connecticut's Legacy Society, as well as contribute during my lifetime, because Preservation Connecticut is the only statewide preservation organization and it needs individuals like me to support it. The Legacy Society allows me to be flexible in my estate planning by donating outright today and from my estate further down the road."



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Restoration in progress, 1977.



The restored Lord Tavern, in 1978.



The Lord Tavern today.

### *Lord Tavern, cont'd from page 20*

But there were difficulties along the way. As board minutes show, grants were slow in arriving, restoration plans had to be approved by the historic district commission as well as the National Park Service, finding a contractor proved difficult, poor-quality work had to be redone, and of course everything cost more than anticipated. Worst of all, buyer interest was frustratingly low, and the few offers received were below the Trust's break-even amount, calculated at \$45,000. On several occasions the minutes record requests to local preservationists and lenders to help market the building, and the Trust had to

ask for lenders to assume interest on their notes, allowing the Trust to pay only a discounted amount.

In sum, the original intentions for the Trust were only partly met. Government funding was more crucial to the organization's operations than anticipated, a phenomenon that has continued to be the case ever since. Not counting staff time and administrative expenses skewed the accounting. In the years that followed, many revolving fund projects ended up losing money. That was to be expected—the idea has always been to support projects that could not attract conventional funding, so a greater proportion of them were bound to fail. Which meant the need

for ongoing fundraising to replenish the fund, as well as ongoing internal debates about what level of risk was acceptable.

Today, Preservation Connecticut continues to work through the real estate market, if in different, and more limited, ways. We advertise endangered buildings for sale in the Historic Properties Exchange, we help match developers to historic properties, we invest in rehabilitation projects through bridge loans for historic tax credits, and we help manage forty-odd historic properties through preservation easements. All these are the preservation children of the Lord Tavern. 🌿

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## Fifty years/fifty places

### 1970s: Lord Tavern, Norwich

One of the main reasons for the establishment of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation (now Preservation Connecticut) in 1975 was to have an entity that could operate outside the bureaucratic restraints of the state government and raise private funding for preservation projects.

Almost immediately, a project presented itself that would allow the fledgling Trust to show its potential. The Eleazer Lord Tavern, built in about 1760 facing the Norwichtown Green, had been the subject of a preservation dispute for several years. In 1972, the property owner, Abraham Figarsky, was denied a certificate of appropriateness to demolish the building. The historic district commission said no, Figarsky sued, and in June 1976 the Connecticut Supreme Court upheld the commission's decision. That was only half the job, though: government (the historic district commission) kept the building from being torn down but couldn't force the owner to maintain it.

Here was an opportunity for private action. By August the organization was able to buy the tavern for \$45,000, and by October, the building had been listed for sale. In the meantime, the board pursued plans to restore the exterior. The work, they assumed, would help the building sell more quickly.

The restoration was completed and in July 1979 the building sold for \$38,000 to Stephen Plank, who moved his insurance business in. In a final summary, the Trust's treasurer reported



that, thanks to outside funding received, the project yielded a gain of approximately \$2,900, not counting administrative expenses or staff time.

The Lord Tavern project got the Connecticut Trust started with a success: the building was not only saved from demolition, but also restored and put back to profitable use. Nearly 50 years later, it still stands proud across the street from the Norwichtown Green and shields the green from commercial strip development beyond. Private loans and donations helped fund the purchase and restoration, leveraging public funding that included a grant-in-aid from the National Park Service.

*continued on page 19*