

PRESERVATION CONNECTICUT NEWS



Poet James Merrill and his partner, David Jackson, lived in this apartment in Stonington, now a National Historic Landmark.

Rachel Carley, National Register of Historic Places

Discovering Connecticut's LGBTQ past

Recognition of LGBTQ citizens' contributions to our nation's economic, social, and cultural history has been on the rise in recent decades. However, in Connecticut, historic preservationists' attention to that history is nominal, evidenced by the small handful of sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places for their association with LGBTQ history.

In an effort to raise awareness and promote the long-term preservation of LGBTQ sites, Preservation Connecticut (PCT)

has launched a new project to identify important buildings and landscapes associated with Connecticut's LGBTQ community and its relationship with the broad patterns of local, state, and national history.

Many important sites are widely known, but not for their connection to LGBTQ history. The Connecticut State Capitol, Union Station in Hartford, and the Wadsworth Atheneum are only a few examples that hold important history and significance to the

Continued on page 6

At the Capitol



Staff members from Preservation Connecticut at the Capitol on February 20.

As we go to press in late February, Preservation Connecticut is following several bills that directly affect preservation.

Among them is **SB 956, An act increasing funding for the Community Investment Account**, introduced by Sen. Catherine Osten (D-Sprague, a PCT Trustee). It calls for raising the municipal document recording fees that fund the Community Investment Account by six dollars, with one dollar retained by the town, and the other five used to fund programs in affordable housing, open space acquisition, farmland protection, and historic preservation. The preservation portion includes an annual payment to Preservation Connecticut, as the State-chartered nonprofit partner to the State Historic Preservation Office. Because it is a dedicated fund outside of the general budget, the Community Investment Account is able to provide a reliable resource stream for these place-based programs. However, it has not kept up with rising costs in recent years, so an increase is needed.

Two bills, **HB 5290, An act concerning the installation of solar energy systems in historic districts**, and **Raised Bill 6959, an act concerning the approval of solar energy systems in historic districts**, would prohibit historic district commissions from denying approval for solar energy systems on rear-facing roofs—areas that often are not visible from public rights-of-way and are not under commissions' purview anyhow.

A hearing was held on the raised bill on February 19, but no testimony has been posted.

SB 240, An act creating a municipal right of first refusal for certain historic properties, would do just that. The bill uses the definition of “historic property” used on Section 7-147p of the General Statutes: “any individual building, structure, object or site that is significant in the history, architecture, archaeology and culture of the state, its political subdivisions or the nation and the real property used in connection therewith.”

Intended to help cash-strapped communities by pooling regional resources, **HB 6536, An act concerning regional Councils of Government and inland wetlands review and historic property maintenance**, would (in addition to coordinating wetlands reviews) require regional councils of government to employ building and housing code officials to inspect the conditions of historic buildings and would authorize them to use federal Community Development Block Grant funds for maintenance or repair of historic buildings. In written testimony, some COG representatives expressed cautious interest in working with historic buildings, particularly to increase the supply of affordable housing, while pointing out that their own funding was limited, and federal regulations govern how CDBG funds are used.

Of course, the biggest item on the legislature's to-do list is the **budget for the next two fiscal years**. Most of the State's preservation programming is funded

through the Community Investment Act. Three SHPO staff positions do come under the general fund, but those positions are still funded under Governor Lamont's proposed budget. Conversations with legislative leaders indicate that new funding requests for preservation are unlikely to succeed.

All this takes place against the chaotic federal backdrop of firings and re-hirings, spending freezes and thaws, and lawsuits and counter-lawsuits—which makes the fiscal stability offered through the Community Investment Act all the more crucial to a consistent, effective preservation program in Connecticut.

In addition to executive-branch actions, the National Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), which provides funding for state and tribal historic preservation officers as well as grants for preservation needs, is up for reauthorization. Five SHPO staff positions in Connecticut are funded through the HPF. In a webinar on February 12, legislative affairs personnel from the National Trust for Historic Preservation observed that while programs can operate without current authorization, unauthorized programs are much more vulnerable to elimination. The National Trust is working with a bipartisan group of Congress members for reauthorization as well as to undo some changes made to the federal historic rehabilitation tax credits in the tax reduction act of 2017, which also is up for renewal. They were cautiously optimistic.

For updates, visit preservationct.org/advocacy-2025. 🌿

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Many thanks to the legislators, trustees, partners and members who joined us at the Capitol on February 20 to celebrate Preservation Connecticut's 50th anniversary. We hosted a meet-and-greet sharing preservation stories and discussing current challenges with those who stopped by. It was the official kick-off to our year-long acknowledgement of the past half century of Preservation Connecticut's work and impact. We shared our impact map which you can visit at preservationct.org/impact to see what we've done in your community. It was only fitting to celebrate at the Capitol as it was the legislature which created us in 1975!

Let's continue the celebration. Please join us at one or more of these spring events:

- March 14: **James Merrill House**, Stonington member tour and reception including updates on Connecticut's LGBTQ+ places surveying project
- March 21: America 250 conference, "Shaping a Commemoration Rooted in Belonging," University of Connecticut. Renée Tribert, Chris Wigren, and Stacey Vairo are planning a session on town greens along

with Susan Barlow, Manchester town historian.

- April 10: Connecticut Preservation Action is hosting **New Tools for Old Buildings: Historic Preservation Incentive Zoning** at the Augusta Curtis Cultural Center in Meriden. Three morning sessions will shed light on creative zoning laws that encourage historic preservation in Stamford, New Canaan and Norwalk. Visit ctpreservationaction.org for more information.
- April 26: **Ball and Socket factory tour**, Cheshire, one of our 50th anniversary events highlighting our Making Places historic industrial sites survey and technical assistance grant programs. Members will enjoy a tour and reception.
- May 3: **Jane's Walks**, statewide. For the second year, Preservation Connecticut is coordinating discussion walks across the state to build community and celebrate our heritage as part of a global festival honoring Jane Jacob's urban planning legacy. Lead a walk in your community or plan to attend one or more walks. See preservationct.org/janes-walk-connecticut for information.

- May 8: **Connecticut Preservation Awards** at the New Haven Country Club in Hamden. An annual spring high point as we celebrate the individual and team achievements of volunteer and professional preservationists around State.

These are just some of the events we are planning for you this year! We sincerely hope to see *you* at many of these gatherings this year. Afterall, it's our members that sustain Preservation Connecticut and make us strong.

Lastly, we reflect on passing of a pillar of preservation, **Nancy Alderman**, in January. Nancy, who served on the board of the Connecticut Trust in the 1980s and '90s, was a tireless advocate for environmental and historic concerns. She led the effort that converted an abandoned railroad line to the Farmington Canal Rail Trail, battling development interests, bureaucratic inertia, and a lack of cooperation among municipalities—an effort that was recognized by last year's Harlan Griswold Award. Our condolences go out to her family and friends.

—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

April 2, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.
May 7, 2025, at 9:30 a.m.

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



From the field: the **Circuit Riders** report

J. Montanaro

Preservation Connecticut's Circuit Riders are always available to assist our constituents with preservation planning, fundraising, grant applications, and listing properties on the State and National Register of Historic Places, among many other activities. Here are a few recent highlights:

- **Public programs:** For the third year, Circuit Riders presented at TradesUp Spark in Kent. This annual event encourages school-aged children's interest in traditional trades. This year's participants built small-scale model barns, churches, and houses while they learned about timber framing and architecture. Do you have an event you would like us to attend? Give us a call!
- **Technical consultation.** Through the Technical Assistance Consultancy (TAC) program, supported by the State Historic Preservation Office, Circuit Riders worked with Mark Aldieri, AIA, of Mark Aldieri Architect, LLC, to successfully advocate for the cultural and financial benefits of restoring the historic store front of the Norwich Arts Center, formerly the St. Mary's Total Abstinence and Benevolence Building, constructed in 1892. The TAC program was recently leveraged to successfully pause the demolition of one of Newington's oldest structures. Over the years, the TAC program has served as a powerful tool to stave off unnecessary demolition and to set organizations up for success by providing vital information at the onset of long-term projects.
- **Grant Support Activity:** A large portion of CR activity has been to support PCT's 1772 Foundation Preservation Matching Grant Program. PCT and the 1772 Foundation have been partnering since 2011 and, in that time, have granted over \$1.7 million in funding to some 200 nonprofit preservation projects throughout our state. The demand for 1772 Foundation Funds this year was the highest it has been since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. PCT received 80 pre-applications with a total request of \$781,656. Twenty-five applicants have been invited to apply, and the Circuit Riders are visiting and working with each of those applicants to give them the best chance of success. The CR team also continues to work in partnership with the New Haven Preservation Trust on the Winchester Repeating Arms Historic District Homeowner Grant. PCT received 46 applications, and the committee selected 20. At this time, PCT has issued nearly \$170,000 out of a total of \$200,000 to community homeowners. 🌿



Preservation Connecticut Circuit Riders hosted an annual retreat for preservation field staff throughout New England.

M. Forino



Circuit Riders review potential 1772 Foundation grant projects

A. Floersheimer



Circuit Riders promoted historic preservation at the hands-on TradesUp Spark program in Kent.

Circuit Riders by the numbers: October-December 2024

site visits made: **47**
communities visited: **37**
technical consultancies: **5**
educational programs presented: **5**
historic register nominations completed: **1**

How can the Circuit Riders help you with preservation questions or issues? To request a site visit, go to preservationct.org/sitevisit.

The Circuit Rider Program is partially funded by the State Historic Preservation Office and through the generous support of our members and preservation partners.

Historic Restoration Fund grants make preservation possible

The Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office awarded Historic Restoration Fund (HRF) grants to eight organizations in January 2025. The HRF program has a yearly budget of \$1 million. This year, more than 50 organizations submitted a letter of intent. Twenty-six were invited to submit full applications, requesting a total of \$1,890,933. Those awarded grants are:

Historic New England:

\$137,500 for the exterior envelope restoration of the Roseland Cottage barn in Woodstock.

Town of Wilton:

\$55,000 for lead abatement of windows, siding, doors and trim on the Platt Raymond house at Ambler Farm.

Faith Congregational Church, Hartford:

\$200,000 for roof replacement.

Booth & Dimock Memorial Library, Coventry:

\$6,100 for repairs to floor framing.

Golden Hill United Methodist Church, Bridgeport:

\$149,900 for window restoration, roof repairs, and masonry repairs.

Bacon Academy, Colchester:

\$51,500 for roof replacement, repairs to the cupola and bell tower, and painting.

Congregation Mishkan Israel, Hamden:

\$200,000 for roof replacement, rotunda flashing, and clerestory window repairs.

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Hartford:

\$200,000 for coal bunker repairs and entrance ramp at its Caldwell Colt Memorial Building.

These projects will go out to bid in March, with requests for proposals posted on Preservation Connecticut's website, preservationct.org/rfp. Work must be completed within two years.

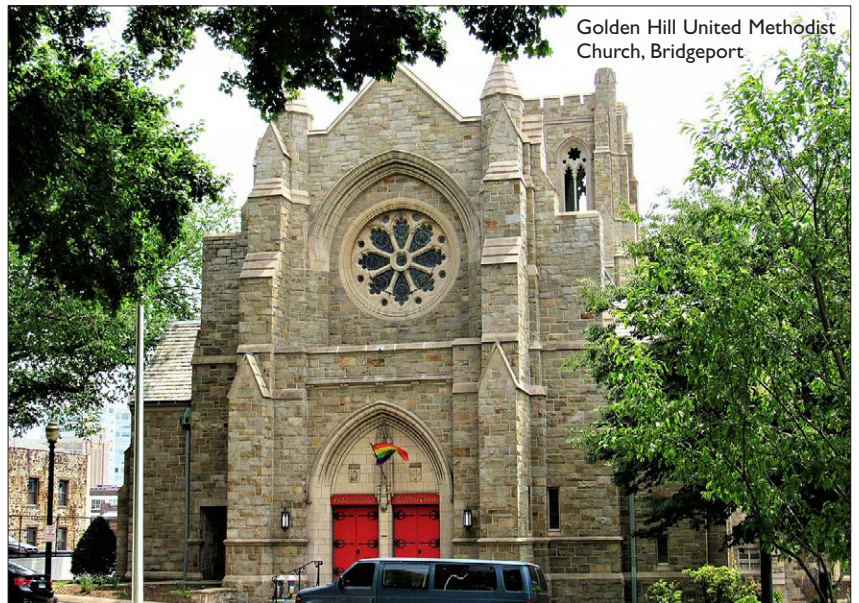
Historic Restoration Fund grants are made possible through the Community Investment Act, which provides funding for historic preservation, open space acquisition, farmland preservation, and affordable housing. We thank the legislators who protect this important fund and make preservation grants possible across Connecticut. The demand for funding is high, and SHPO is fortunate to be able to offer \$1 million each year.

To apply for the 2026 round of funding, visit https://portal.ct.gov/decd/content/historic-preservation/02_review_funding_opportunities/grant-opportunities/historic-restoration-fund-grants. Pre-applications are due March 28, 2025. 🌿

Wikipedia, Kenneth C. Zirkel



Bacon Academy, Colchester



Golden Hill United Methodist Church, Bridgeport



Historic New England
Roseland Cottage barn, Woodstock

community and represent the growing political power and social influence of the LGBTQ Rights movement in Connecticut and nationwide.

There were hundreds of sites—bars, bookstores, health clinics, restaurants, and community centers—that offered a place for anonymity, freedom of expression, and identity formation that can tell a more nuanced and fuller history. However, many without architectural grandeur or associations with mainstream history are at serious risk of being demolished and lost forever; many already have, and the time for us to act is now.

To get started, Edward F. Gerber Fellow Anna Fossi spent much of 2024 participating in seminars with PCT staff and researching. She created a preliminary list and map of sites related to LGBTQ history in Connecticut to provide a foundation upon which to build a more extensive survey in the future. A map of those sites is featured on PCT's website at preservationct.org/lgbtq, and some of them are described on page 7.

Upon completion of the initial project, Fossi and LGBTQ historian William Mann presented the project at PCT's educational series, *Talking About Preservation*. The response to the presentation was overwhelmingly positive, and it has encouraged PCT staff to explore ways to expand this project into a new organizational initiative.

Preservation Connecticut, in collaboration with independent scholars, university history departments, and college students, plans to pursue funding for a multi-phase project that will include identification, collection of oral histories, education, and promotion of significant places associated with Connecticut's LGBTQ history.

We need your help. These plans are in the initial stages, and before we go much further, PCT wants member and community feedback. In late April, PCT will convene a roundtable of scholars, activists, and others interested in this project to provide input



Hartford's first annual Gay and Lesbian Pride rally was held at the Old State House on June 26, 1982.



Preservation Connecticut's preliminary

and guide us as we pursue this initiative further. If you would like to participate in the roundtable or provide other input, email Michael Forino, Ph.D., at mforino@preservationct.org or Andrea Floersheimer at afloersheimer@preservationct.org. 🌿

For more information:

LGBTQ places in Connecticut:
preservationct.org/lgbtq

A brief history of Connecticut's LGBTQ community, Connecticut Museum of Culture and History:

www.connecticutmuseum.org/lgbtqtimeline/
GLBTQ Archives, Elihu Burritt Library,
Central Connecticut State University:
library.ccsu.edu/help/spcoll/equity/

Do you know of a site associated with LGBTQ+ history? Please let us know at
preservationct.org/lgbtq-site-submission-form

The National Park Service published, LGBTQ America, a nationwide theme study on LGBTQ history, in 2016. This important document covers topics such as doing and preserving LGBTQ history, historical themes, sample case studies, and a preliminary list of places around the nation associated with LGBTQ history. In February, the National Park Service removed LGBTQ America from its website. However, Preservation Connecticut has obtained a copy and is happy to share it with other researchers and preservationists.

LGBTQ places in Connecticut

These sites, identified in preliminary research, illustrate some of the themes and stories of LGBTQ people in Connecticut, but because of the nature of the material readily available at the early stage of the project, do not represent the full range of the community's history. Where places are listed on the National Register, nominations almost never recognize LGBTQ significance.

Bridgeport: Poli Place Theater, 1927

In January 1927, actress Mae West previewed her play *The Drag: A Homosexual Comedy in Three Acts* at the Poli Palace Theater (1921; NR) on Main Street. For the time, the show offered a sympathetic depiction of gay life, leading *Variety* to call it "a deliberate play for morbid interest" and a "jazzed-up revel in the garbage heap."

Bridgeport: Bloodroot, 1977-present

In 1977, feminists Noel Furie, Selma Miriam, Pat Shea, and Betsey Beaven opened Bloodroot, which they describe as "a feminist restaurant." They are dedicated to "ethnic and ethical" food preparation and a seasonal vegetarian menu. The layout includes an open window between the dining room and kitchen, allowing customers to serve themselves, and eliminating staff reliance on tips. Miriam died in February 2025, but Noel Furie continues to run Bloodroot.

Hartford: 795 Farmington Avenue, c.1982-2012

Metrolink, Connecticut's longest-running LGBTQ publication, had offices in this building for most of the time between about 1982 to 2012. The building also housed the first gay community center, Metropolitan Community Church (a gay congregation), and feminist and LGBTQ bookstores. With *The Reader's Feast* a block away, the area was the heart of Hartford's gay community for many years.

Hartford: Old State House, 1982

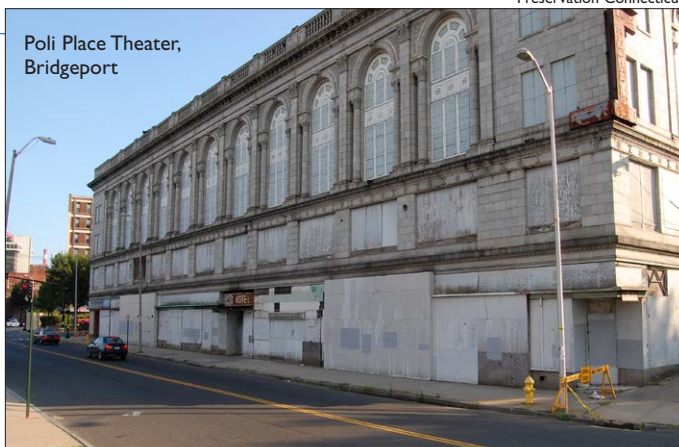
On June 26, 1982, roughly 350 people attended Hartford's first annual Lesbian and Gay Pride rally, held on the grounds of the Old State House (1796; NHL). The Greater Hartford Lesbian and Gay Task Force planned the event.

Hartford: Connecticut State Capitol, 1972, 1989, 1990

LGBTQ activists have staged three significant protests at the Capitol (1872-1879; NHL). In 1972, local groups rallied to protest housing and employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. That same year, the Human Rights and Opportunities Committee proposed a bill to the State Senate to address these issues, but only 6 out of 36 senators voted for it.

In March 1989, after numerous attempts to pass the anti-discrimination bill, the Connecticut Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights (CCLGCR) held a rally outside, while some protestors unfurled two large banners in the House of Representatives chamber bearing the names of legislators who voted against the bill. Police tore down the banners.

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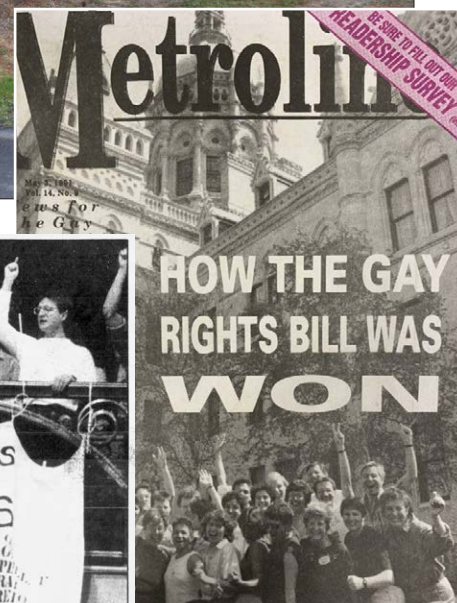


Poli Place Theater,
Bridgeport

C. Wigen



Bloodroot restaurant,
Bridgeport

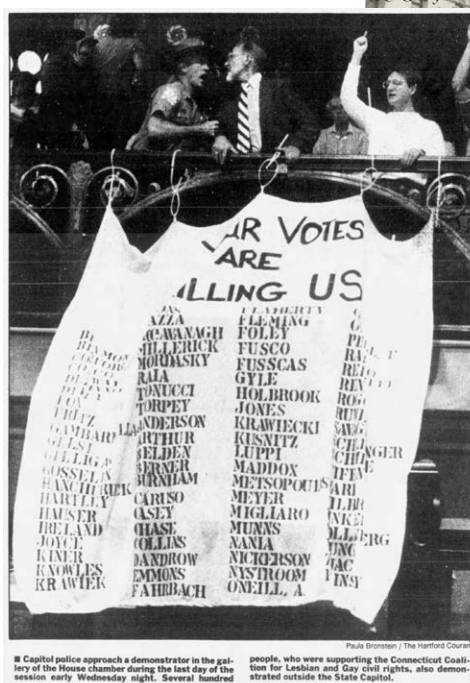


Metrolink

Metrolink, 1991, Vol. 14 No. 9, LGBTQ
Archives, Central Connecticut State University

Protestors at the
State Capitol, 1989

The Hartford Courant via
Newspapers.com



Capitol police approach a demonstrator in the gallery of the House chamber during the last day of the session early Wednesday night. Several hundred

people, who were supporting the Connecticut Coalition for Lesbian and Gay civil rights, also demonstrated outside the State Capitol.

On February 7, 1990, protestors interrupted legislators again. This time, they displayed a banner behind Governor William O'Neill, which read, "WE DEMAND LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS, BILL." A bill granting protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, employment, and credit finally passed on April 11, 1991.

Hartford: Union Station, 1940s-1971

During the 1940s and 1950s, Union Station (1889; NR) was a surreptitious meeting place for gay men, leading to police raids in 1952. Authorities charged men with lewdness, which carried a maximum sentence of six months. The men often were outed in newspapers, which listed their full names, charges, and sometimes addresses. Decades later, on April 9, 1971, activists protested at the station during a Good Friday "Stations of the Cross" march, calling the building a "symbol of Gay oppression in this city."

Hartford, Trinity College: OUT Film CT, 1988-present

Held at Trinity College's Cinestudio (1936; NR), OUT Film CT was started by The Gay & Lesbian Cultural Organization in 1988. OUT Film presents LGBTQ cinema throughout the year, culminating in a nine-day festival in June. It is the state's longest-running film festival.



Trinity College's Cinestudio, site of OUT Film CT

New Haven: Partners, 1976-present

While some gay bars traditionally chose out-of-the-way locations, Partners was significant for its visibility on Crown Street, in a well-populated section of the city. It's still situated amidst apartment complexes and restaurants and is easily accessible to the local student population. Partners is known for its three-floor layout, each floor with a different function. In the 1980s, the basement was primarily reserved for women, and it still serves as more of a lounge area. The ground level has the main bar and cocktail lounge, and upstairs is a dance area, formerly for disco.

Hartford: Christ Church Cathedral, 1963, 1971ff.

In 1963, Canon Clinton Jones of Christ Church Cathedral (1828; NR) formed the "Homosexual Committee," later "Project H," with George Higgins, a Trinity College psychology professor, and attorney Donald Cantor. The group provided counseling and educational services for gay members of the church, notably diverging from the American Psychiatric Association's classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder. Instead, it addressed the issues caused by living in a homophobic society. Project H evolved as Jones opened a chapter of the George H. Henry Foundation, a New York organization that helped LGBTQ people with counseling, legal aid, and housing. In 1971, Jones and Higgins developed the Twenty Club, a support group for the transgender community that met at the church for over 30 years.

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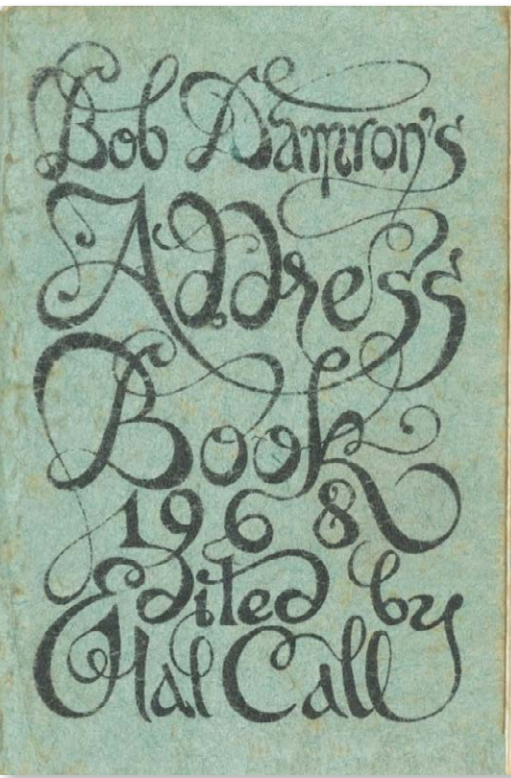
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Damron's Address Book for 1968 listed the Hygienic Lounge in New London

New London: Hygienic Restaurant, 1965-1975

Bob Damron's Address Book, a travel guide for gay men—and, to a lesser extent, lesbians—listed the Hygienic Lounge in editions from 1965 to 1975, at the same address as the 24-hour Hygienic Restaurant (1844; NR). New London's role as a port city made it an accessible location for both locals and travelers. However, its notoriety also drew Navy investigators in the 1970s who would periodically invade bars looking to catch gay sailors.



Salt Meadow, the home of Esther Everett Lape and her Elizabeth Fisher Reed

Stonington: James Merrill house, 1954-1995

Poet James Merrill (1926-1995) lived and worked in this Victorian building from 1954 until his death. Stonington and his apartment provided inspiration for much of Merrill's poetry, including *The Changing Light at Sandover* (1982), his book-length epic poem based on communications with the spirit world that he carried out with his partner, David Jackson. Merrill left the house to the Stonington Village Association, which uses it for a writer-in-residence program. The house is a National Historic Landmark.

Westbrook: Salt Meadow, Lape-Reed house, 1927-1975

Journalist Esther Everett Lape (1881-1981) and her partner, scholar and lawyer Elizabeth Fisher Reed (1872-1943), bought an old farm in 1927 and built a fieldstone house where they entertained friends and political allies. One of those was Eleanor Roosevelt, for whom Reed served as attorney and financial advisor. The house is now part of the Stewart McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

Westport: The Cedar Brook Café, 1939-2010

After Millie and Edward Bowe opened what was originally the Cedar Brook Inn in 1939, it soon became known as a gay-friendly establishment. By the 1970s, the bar was a center for gay social life in Fairfield County. When it closed in 2010, the Cedar Brook was one of the country's oldest gay bars—the oldest, some claimed. The building was demolished in 2011.

C. Wigren



Cedar Brook Café, Westport—demolished 2011.

Briefly noted

Tod Bryant

Bridgeport. ►

The Waltersville School is the latest Connecticut addition to the National Register. The school actually comprises two connected buildings, an elementary school completed in 1905 (photograph) and a junior high school from 1918. Constructed to serve the thriving industrial city's rapidly growing population, the school incorporated many Progressive-era architectural features, such as an auditorium and a gymnasium, as well as facilities for differentiated paths of learning including domestic science and vocational training. Specialized spaces included wood workshops, a cobbling room with shoe-shine station, and sewing and laundry rooms,



intended to train the students, largely the foreign-born children of factory workers. Notably, in 1910 the elementary school housed the first class in Bridgeport for children with mental handicaps, students who

previously had been classified as institutional or disciplinary cases although apparently some of them merely did not speak English. They received a combination of classroom and manual instruction.

Kelley Berliner/TAC



Ledyard. ►

On February 20, the town planning and zoning commission voted unanimously to reject the application by Gales Ferry Intermodal LLC (GFI) to quarry stone at Mount Decatur, site of a former military outpost from the War of 1812. GFI wanted to remove a large portion of the mountain, process the stone into aggregate for a variety of projects, and then sell the leveled property for commercial or industrial development. After months of hearings and meetings that drew up to 200 attendees, the commission determined that the quarry proposal failed to meet town zoning regulations in 13 areas, including traffic congestion, loose silica dust, noise, and vibrations to nearby properties. GFI has

not announced its further intentions, but an appeal seems likely.

In the meantime, GFI fulfilled its promise to donate the immediate site of Fort Decatur to the Archaeological Conservancy. As announced in a press release on January 10, the 3.44-acre parcel will be preserved as open space, protected from future development and available for research overseen by the Conservancy. GFI had promised to donate an additional 5.87 acres to the Conservancy if its zoning application was approved, along with preparing a National Register nomination and providing funding for educational materials.



Bristol. ▲

The Bristol Housing Authority has presented plans to renovate Cambridge Park, a wartime housing project constructed in 1942 to serve workers in defense industries during World War II. The complex currently has 196 affordable units in 83 buildings. As presented to the Bristol Zoning Commission in February, the Authority proposes demolishing eight buildings, leaving 75 containing 174 apartments, in order to create more green space and allow room for more parking spaces. The remaining buildings will be renovated

New Haven. ►

In December, the City of New Haven unveiled preliminary proposals for the New Haven Green, intended to improve the Green's condition and encourage broader use by the public. Some of the initial ideas raised concerns about their effect on the Green's historic landscape, which in its essentials has remained constant for nearly 200 years. The Green is a National Historic Landmark, designated in 1971, when standards for documentation were less complete than now. Consequently, information about the Green's history and design is lacking. To encourage improvements that protect and enhance the Green while accommodating modern-day needs, the New Haven Preservation Trust (NHPT) and Preservation Connecticut put together a memorandum that identifies



and analyzes the Green's character-defining features. The document does not take positions on any specific proposals but is intended as a

resource offered by the two preservation organizations to the City of New Haven and the Committee of the Proprietors

of the Common and Undivided Lands in New Haven—a five-member body that has ultimate decision-making authority for the Green. The NHPT and PCT continue to work with planners and the public as the process goes on. The memorandum on character-defining features can be read at nhpt.org/nhpt-blog.

City of Bristol



and made more energy efficient; some will be handicap-accessible. The work will be carried out in four phases. Because of the complex's history, the State Historic Preservation Office is reviewing the plans. Built quickly and economically to meet urgent needs, many wartime housing projects have very basic designs that lack the visual appeal that inspires preservation efforts. Renovating Cambridge Park for continued use will conserve resources and preserve evidence of the war effort in Bristol.

Newtown Conservation Commission



Newtown. ▲

The Borough of Newtown Planning and Zoning commission approved a housing development on Castle Hill Road that could affect a portion of an historic Revolutionary War-era road, but with fewer houses than requested. Developer George Trudell had requested approval to build 117 houses in clusters while leaving Reservoir Road, part of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, as part of an open space easement covering approximately 85 of the property's 132 acres. The commission's approval included conditions such as removing 18 houses closest to the Rochambeau trail and requiring that other trails be open to public use. Mr. Trudell told newspapers that he

intends "to be discussing the conditions." In July, the town Board of Selectmen voted to discontinue Reservoir Road. The unimproved trail is listed on the National Register as part of the route that French armies took in their march from Rhode Island to Virginia in 1781. While the development would not directly affect the road, citizens fear the loss of its deeply wooded setting. Newtown resident Eric Thompson claims that there were several errors in the Town's process to discontinue the road. Specifically, there was no town meeting or public vote as required to approve the discontinuance. He has called on the Selectmen to rescind the July vote.

continued on next page



R. Tribert

▲ Portland.

In a preservation effort that has stretched nearly 20 years, Brainerd Place welcomed its first apartment tenants in January. In addition to residents, the first retail business, a Starbucks, opened in February. The 14-acre development, on the site of the former Elmcrest Psychiatric Hospital, is billed as “A modern New England town center,” with 348 units of housing and commercial enterprises housed in six new buildings as well as three historic houses—all listed on the National Register. The Hart-Jarvis house (1829), childhood home of the Hartford community leader and philanthropist Elizabeth Jarvis Colt, is slated for professional offices. The Erastus Brainerd, Jr., house (c.1852, in photo),

home to the owner of a 19th-century Portland brownstone quarry, will have amenities for residents. And the home of bank president and ornithologist John H. Sage (1884) will be commercial or retail shops. After Elmcrest closed in 2006, developers planned to demolish the houses. A sustained effort by local and statewide preservationists, including a Vibrant Communities Initiative grant from Preservation Connecticut, helped make the case that using historic buildings could enhance the project, and led to preservation requirements’ being included in the planning and zoning agreement.

Torrington. ►

A new state law is helping to ensure that the Yankee Pedlar Inn (1891; NR) continues to play its role as a downtown landmark. For more than ten years, City officials tried to work with the owner of the long-vacant inn without seeing significant progress toward needed repairs. In 2022 the City filed suit in 2022 under PA 19-92, An Act Concerning Abandoned and Blighted Property Receivership, which allows municipalities with a population of at least 35,000 people to seek a court-appointed receiver for vacant, abandoned, or blighted properties. After giving the owner one more opportunity to start work, the court appointed the Torrington Development Corporation (TDC) as receiver in July, making the inn the first property in the state to be assigned

under the law. A conditions assessment funded by a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office identified priorities for repairs, and in January the TDC reported that it had installed heaters to stabilize the building, commissioned a marketing study, received four responses to a Request for Qualifications from interested developers, and shortlisted two responders after interviews. As Mayor Elinor Carbone told Connecticut Insider, the “next step is to file a report with the court that will establish a fair market value of the property and, hopefully,

Waterford. ►

As reported in January, developer Mark Steiner’s lawsuit to prevent the demolition of Seaside Sanatorium was dismissed in December by Judge Amir Shaikh. The suit was filed under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act (CEPA), which allows any citizen to sue to prevent the unreasonable demolition of buildings listed on the National Register. In the Seaside case, both parties waived their request for an evidentiary hearing, so no evidence was presented to show reasonable alternatives to demolition. Without that evidence, the judge ruled in favor of the State’s claim that by completing an Environmental Impact Evaluation it had fulfilled the legal requirement and proved that demolition was reasonable. One attorney (who asked not to be identified) has suggested that an approach that presented alternatives—including analysis of building condition, schematic architectural plans, and financial pro formas—might have succeeded. Of course, gathering that material would be time-consuming and expensive.

Mr. Steiner is now exploring further options to save the Sanatorium, including asking the National Trust for Historic Preservation for

C. Wiggen



includes a list of interested and qualified developers that can make restoration and redevelopment happen.” For updates, visit developingtorrington.com.



legal assistance and seeking potential developers to demonstrate that viable alternatives do exist. However, Deputy Commissioner Mason Trumble of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, which oversees state parks, reiterated the intention to demolish Seaside, even if a feasible option for using some or all the buildings were to be presented. The State has indicated that planning for developing the park is still underway and that demolition would not begin before October of this year.

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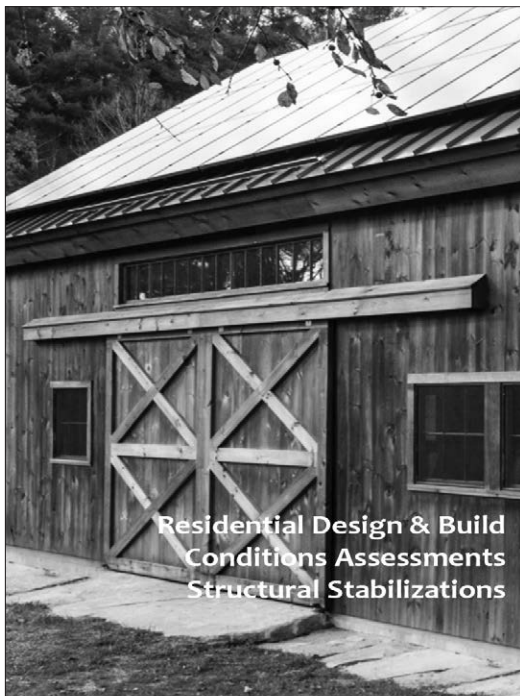
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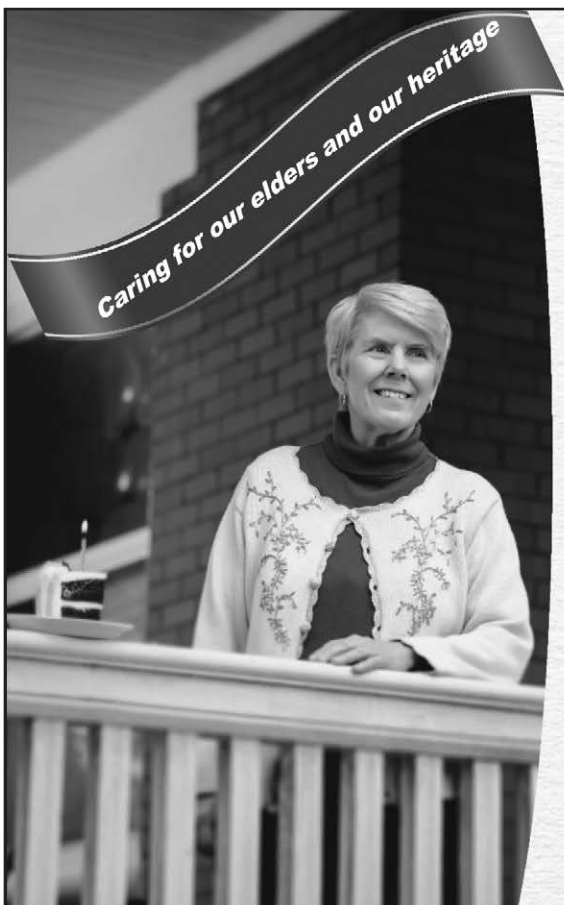
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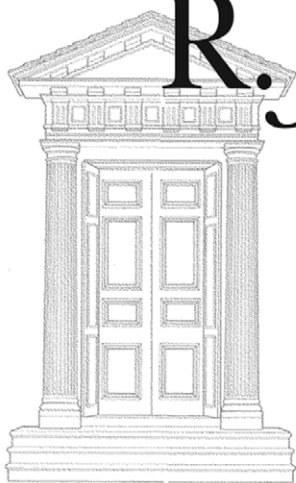
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HISTORIC PROPERTIES EXCHANGE

Threatened Buildings and Easement Properties Available — March/April 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, or contact Christopher Wigren, Deputy Director.

535 Migeon Avenue, Torrington (1896, c. 1905, 1906, c. 1909, c.1970, 1973, c. 1995) \$2,750,000

Opportunity to redevelop Union Hardware Company on over 11 acres in Torrington, established in 1854 for the production of ice skates. Production later expanded to include roller skates, fishing rods, nail clippers, golf club shafts, handcuffs, and more. Chicago-based sporting goods conglomerate Brunswick Sports Products Co. purchased in 1960 and sporting goods became the primary products. In 1996, the company was acquired by FM Precision Golf Manufacturing Corporation and later by Royal Precision, Inc. and True Temper Sports, Inc., which closed the factory in 2006. This property is listed in Preservation Connecticut's *Mills: Making Places of Connecticut* industrial survey, which identifies the complex as a candidate for



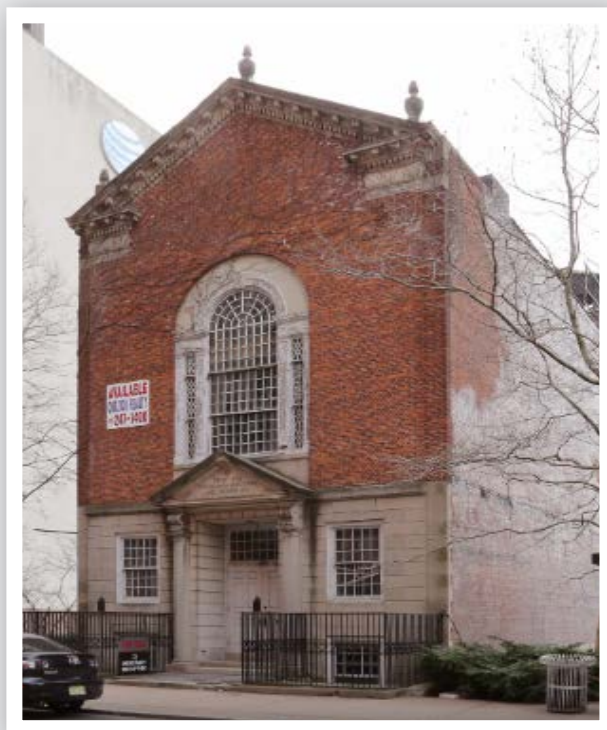
listing on the State Register of Historic Places. If listed, it would be eligible for State historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 225,000 sq. ft.

**Contact: Dom Giglio, Giglio Commercial Real Estate,
203-755-0030, dgiglio@gigliocre.com**

215 Pearl Street, Hartford (1924) \$779,900

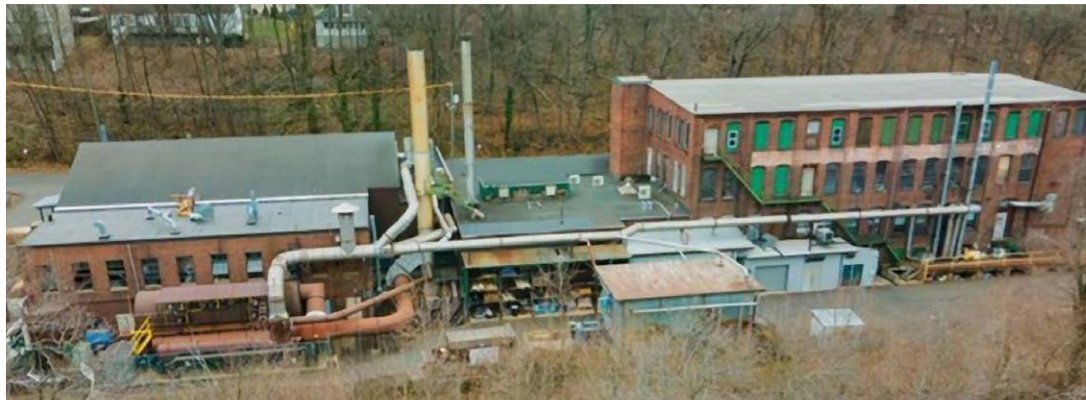
Former Ados Isreal Synagogue available for purchase. Georgian Revival building designed by local Hartford architect Milton Hayman as the First Unitarian Church. Unitarians stayed at this location until relocating in 1962. Building was then purchased by Ados Isreal Jewish congregation which remained until closing in 1986 due to reduced number of parishioners. Currently vacant. Located in Ann Street National Register historic district which makes it eligible for State or Federal historic rehabilitation tax credits or, for nonprofit owners, historic rehabilitation grants. Building area 7,712 sq.ft.; 0.20 acres.

**Contact: Jason Diaz, Bershire Hathaway,
860-993-2032, jasondiaz@bhhsne.com**



30 Lenox Street, New Haven (1905) \$2,300,000

Redevelopment opportunity for historic industrial building in New Haven's Fair Haven Heights neighborhood. Constructed for George G. Prentice and Company, which manufactured machine tools until 1911 when acquired by New Britain Machine Company. Later occupants include John T. Doyle Company (packaged foods), J.C. Haartz Inc. (mohair and rubberized fabrics), Duro-Gloss Rubber Company, and Uretex (fabrics). 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 eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 65,000 sq. ft.; lot 2.47 acres.

**Contact: Gena Ruocco-Lockery, GRL & Realtors,
203-641-4862, grlrealtor@aol.com**

728 Main Street, Middletown (1947) \$339,000

Opportunity to purchase iconic O'Rourke's Diner in Middletown. Built by the Mountain View Diner Company in 1946, the Art Deco detailed dining car was moved to its current location in 1947. O'Rourke's Diner operated at this location until closure in June 2023. Located in Middletown's Main Street National Register historic district which makes it eligible for State or Federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area 1,420 sq. ft.; 0.11 acres.

**Contact: Mimi Perrotti, Berkshire Hathaway,
860-595-9888, mimiperrotti@bhhsne.com**



Deadline for the next issue is April 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, or call (203) 562-6312.



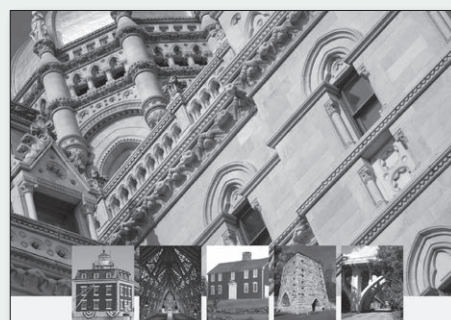
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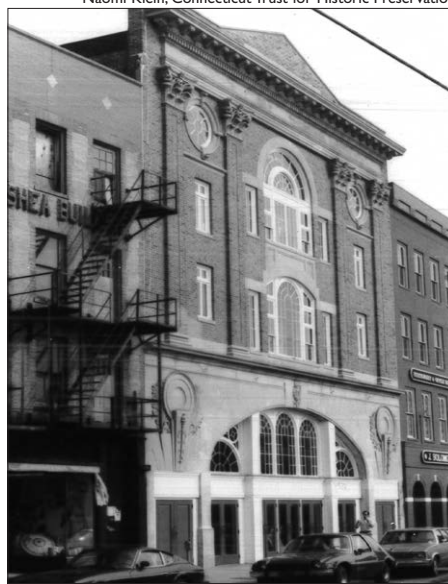
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Old Town Hall, Goshen, in 2025



The Capitol Theater, New London, in 1982



The Capitol Theater, New London, in 2024

Historic theater survey, cont'd from page 20

On the other hand, the survey reported that New London's **Capitol Theater** (NR), built for vaudeville in 1921 and later converted to accommodate both movies and live stage shows, had sunk to showing X-rated movies before it was shut down in 1974. Fifty years later, the Capitol is still standing, but still vacant and for sale; unfortunately the interior is badly deteriorated.

Survey work never ends. New information is constantly arising that leads us to seek out places previously unrecognized or to find new meaning in places already recorded. Since 1981, Preservation Connecticut has surveyed town greens, barns, industrial sites, places associated with 20th-century artists and writers, sites listed in the Green

Book guides for African American travelers, and landscapes designed by the Olmsted landscape firm; information from these is available through websites maintained by PCT or others. In addition to our new survey of sites associated with the history of LGBTQ people in Connecticut (see page 1), we are seeking to update and digitize the theater survey.

Surveys are only the beginning. They help us to know what we have, but they are merely the prelude to recognizing and preserving the places they identify. Actions can include listing on the State or National Register, legislation, or advocacy efforts. It all starts with knowing what you have...



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Fifty years / fifty places

1980s: Historic theater survey

The first step to preservation is knowing what you have, so surveys to identify and evaluate historic places have been part of Preservation Connecticut's mission from the first. The Special Act that established PCT (under the name Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation) in 1975 included among the new organization's purposes, "To survey historic or architecturally important sites and to determine the cost of their rehabilitation or restoration as part of a balanced and effective program of historic and architectural preservation."

In 1976, PCT's first employee was tasked with preparing a survey of endangered buildings to be used in planning a revolving loan program. And in 1979 the organization carried out its first survey of historic resources, in the Dwight neighborhood of New Haven. That survey was based geographically, but others have taken a thematic approach, beginning with a survey of historic theaters in 1981.

That survey followed the demolition of Victorian opera houses in New Britain and Middletown and the formation of the Connecticut Association of Historic Theaters (CAHT), led by cultural advocate Nancy Savin, in 1981. Working with CAHT, PCT obtained grants from the Connecticut Historical Commission and Chase Enterprises in 1982 to make a survey of historic theaters built before 1940. Surveyors started from a preliminary list of 130 theaters, opera houses, concert halls, and movie palaces, and carried out in-depth documentation for 50 buildings. Priorities were buildings threatened by demolition or deterioration, as well as buildings that illustrated special features of theater design.

In addition to individual building reports, the survey included a short background history outlining theater types,



Old Town Hall, Goshen, in 1982

including vaudeville houses, public halls, community theaters, and summer music sheds, as well as the architectural styles and technologies that shaped them.

Since 1982, many of the theaters surveyed have been included in the State or National Register of Historic Places. Some have continued to be well cared for and used; others have been restored and returned to use. Some continue to sit vacant, and all too many have been demolished.

One of the lucky ones is Goshen's **Old Town Hall**, built in 1895 for town offices and a community hall. By 1981, the town offices had moved out, but the building was actively used by the Goshen Players, a community theater troupe founded in 1949. Today, the group continues to present plays and musicals in the Old Town Hall, and the building is listed on the National Register as part of the Goshen historic district.

continued on page 19