

# PRESERVATION CONNECTICUT NEWS

## Historic and green:

### A new climate agenda

**P**reservationists have long promoted reusing historic buildings as large-scale recycling, but in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century accelerating climate change has made the conservation argument even more urgent. In January nearly 200 people gathered at the University of Connecticut School of Law in Hartford for a full-day conference titled “Historic and Green: A New Climate Agenda.” The goal of the conference was to begin to create policy recommendations for the State of Connecticut. In the process, presenters and attendees provided a thorough overview of climate issues as they relate to historic places in the state.

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Flooding increasingly threatens historic resources in Connecticut, including the Seaside Village National Register district in Bridgeport.

Diego Celis



## GREEN MACHINE: Harnessing the energy of historic houses

By Todd Levine

**H**istoric preservation and energy efficiency, despite what you may read in the newspapers, do not have to be on opposite sides of the spectrum. In fact, preservationists and environmentalists share a common goal, just approached from different angles. Historic resources *are* environmental resources, a statement enshrined in both the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act.

The adage, “The greenest building is the one already built,” is repeated often, but it expresses a basic truth: many of our historic buildings, and in particular houses, were designed to be as energy efficient as possible. Colonial saltboxes feature low ceilings and large central chimneys to help evenly distribute heat, using less fuel. Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century shoreline cottages feature deep porches to circulate cool air through the rest of the structure. Double-hung wood windows, an almost universal feature in houses constructed between the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, allow for cooler air to pass into the house through the lower sash, and hot air to leave through the upper. Brick and stone houses of any age help regulate temperature in both hot and cold weather through thermal inertia. Maintaining these features of a historic house not only reduces energy waste, but also inherently preserves historic character.

These features of design and construction may appear outdated or insufficient for today’s needs. But a house that has adequate attic insulation, properly working and weatherized windows with storms, and a whole house plan based on an energy assessment can be as energy efficient as a building that has been gutted and rehabbed with new materials.

That said, as we strive to make our homes more energy efficient and to decrease our personal environmental impact, stronger actions can be considered, especially when it



The State Historic Preservation Office approved solar panels for Preservation Connecticut’s headquarters in Hamden.

comes to reversible actions like solar photovoltaic panels.

The National Park Service offers guidance on energy efficiency for historic buildings, but with certain limits. For instance, the NPS considers solar panels on a front facing slope of a roof to have an “adverse effect”—that is, to detract from a building’s historic character.

Here in Connecticut the State Historic Preservation Office is trying to find ways to reduce the impact of adverse effects. One way is to allow building owners to provide what we call “mitigation”—that is, to carry out some action that, even though it doesn’t take away the harm of the adverse action, at least provides a positive counterbalance to it.

Examples of mitigation might be placing a preservation easement on the home (protecting the exterior in perpetuity) or providing a National Register of Historic Places nomination for a site that is eligible for listing.

One unique and successful instance of mitigation is an agreement the SHPO has made with the Connecticut Green Bank for adverse effects caused by the installation of solar photovoltaic panels funded by Green Bank. This agreement created the recently published booklet *Energy Efficiency for Historic Houses: A Practical Guide for Homeowners*.

The *Guide* provides a detailed discussion of energy efficiency in historic houses, beginning with how to assess energy efficiency, what elements are already limiting energy waste, and what improvements can

be made by either repairing existing elements or introducing new, non-destructive measures to improve energy use. Each chapter also features a question-and-answer section, which provides answers to common questions homeowners have, as well as easy steps homeowners can take themselves to improve the energy efficiency of their home. Some highlights of the booklet include:

- Top Ten Reasons to Keep Historic Windows
- Energy Efficiency Checklist
- Proper Placement for Solar Panels
- When to and When Not to Insulate (And with What)

The booklet also provides further reading references and potential funding options for larger energy initiatives. Currently, the Connecticut Green Bank offers several programs specifically for homeowners, including:

- Smart-E Loans: no money down, low-interest financing for energy projects
- Residential Solar Investment Program (RSIP): rebates to help cover the cost of installing photovoltaic (PV) panels
- PosiGen Solar + Efficiency: solar lease program for low to moderate income homeowners

In addition, the Connecticut Historic Homes Tax Credit program can cover expenditures for solar photovoltaic panels, energy efficient HVAC systems, weatherization and repair of historic windows, storm windows, and attic insulation.

The new guide is available online at [ct.gov/historicpreservation](http://ct.gov/historicpreservation). 🌿

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

There was plenty of activity to get the new year started at Preservation Connecticut. We were proud to co-sponsor the conference “Historic and Green: A New Climate Agenda” at UConn School of Law on January 24. By bringing together representatives of environmental, legal, and business interests in addition to preservationists, the conference opened the way to building new alliances for protecting natural and historic resources. We expect it will go down as an important turning point in the crucial effort to create a more sustainable Connecticut. Congratulations to our board chair, and UConn law professor, Sara Bronin, who took the lead in organizing the event.

It was ironic that the *New York Times* chose the weekend after the conference to publish a controversial op-ed piece claiming that preservation hurts cities, in large part by discouraging climate-friendly adaptations to historic buildings as well as driving gentrification. Go to PCT’s blog

to read our response, “Preservation Helps Communities. Period.”

Circuit Rider Brad Schide organized a training event for local historic district commissions in Newtown on February 6. It was attended by commissioners from Newtown, Westport, Wethersfield and New Milford who engaged in discussion on how to be an effective commission. Of note, the group discussed best practices in evaluating proposals for solar installations. Watch for announcements of more workshops in our monthly email updates or contact us to schedule one in your area.

February saw the start of the General Assembly’s 2020 session. So far, it looks like a fairly quiet year for preservation. But, there is a particularly large class of new senators and representatives, so it’s still important to make sure they understand the importance of preservation measures such as the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act, and funding mechanisms like the Community Investment Act. The

CIA coalition is sponsoring a lobby day on March 25 from 8:30 to 3:00. Preservation Connecticut will have a table in the Legislative Office Building concourse, and we’ll be scheduling appointments with key legislators. Come join us! You can find a list of CIA-funded projects in your town at [communityinvestmentact.org](http://communityinvestmentact.org).

In keeping up with discussions on sustainability, several staff members will be attending a conference March 20 on Managed Retreat in the Age of Climate Change, sponsored by UConn’s Climate Adaptation Academy.

As we go to press, staff are looking forward to receiving submissions for the annual Connecticut Preservation Awards. Mark your calendar now for the awards presentation on May 6, at the New Haven Country Club in Hamden. Join us for what’s sure to be an exciting evening celebrating the great things being accomplished in Connecticut’s historic places. 🌿

—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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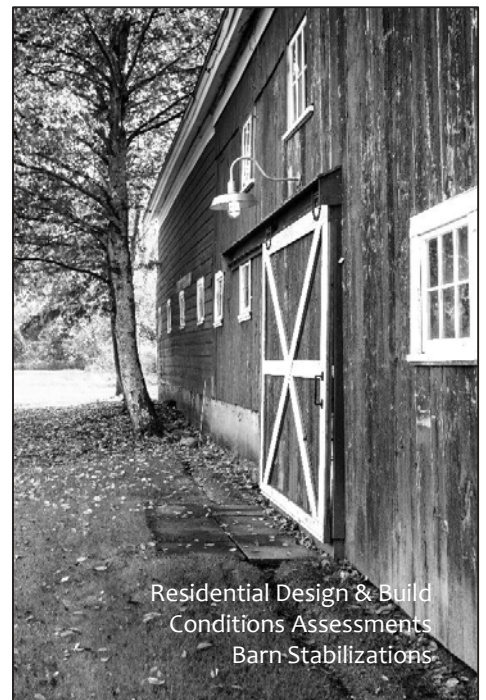
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*Historic and green, cont'd from page 1*

### *Historic preservation and sustainability are inextricably intertwined.*

Conference organizers recognized that the preservation and environmental movements have much in common. Both oppose the waste of materials associated with needless demolition. Both herald the energy efficiency inherent in reusing older buildings. And all agree that resiliency and disaster planning are essential in protecting our most distinctive neighborhoods.

Connecticut has taken notable steps in harmonizing historical and environmental values. For example, state law prevents local historic district commissions from rejecting solar panels absent a compelling reason. Another state law, the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act gives environmental assets and National Register properties equal protection from unreasonable destruction. Also, the Community Investment Act sets aside funding for the preservation of open space, farmland, and historic resources.

Opening the conference, Professor Sara C. Bronin of the law school—also chair of Preservation Connecticut's Trustees and the lead organizer of the conference—summarized this linkage: "There won't be any point in saving buildings if we don't save our planet. On the other hand, saving the environment is meaningless if we lose the culture that makes us human."

### *The problems are difficult and urgent.*

Despite these notable steps, Connecticut's environment and historic places face unprecedented threats from factors associated with the changing climate, including rising sea levels, erosion and flooding caused by stronger and more frequent storms, and increased humidity that fosters mold and decay. These threats also bring economic costs through displacement, the need to replace or modify buildings and infrastructure, and the loss of tax base.

Despite the similar perspectives of preservation and environmentalism, efforts to cope with climate change often highlight the differences between them. At the conference, speakers from environmental groups perceived historic commission



To renovate the historic Swift Factory, located in the North Hartford Promise Zone, the nonprofit developer Community Solutions is using sustainability strategies such as solar panels, roof insulation, high-efficiency systems, and bioswales for storm water management. Project goals include creating jobs, coordinating health services, and providing healthful food.

guidelines as incompatible with sustainability or simply arbitrary and asked for broader consistency in local regulations. Another request was for a less-stringent version of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the nationally accepted model for preservation guidelines.

Many of the differences between preservationists and conservationists were attributed to lack of knowledge of the other's concerns and programs. Joseph Cornish of Boston Landmarks cited the improvements gained in Boston by simply locating preservation and environmental staff next to each other for easy conversation.

Making a crucial point that preservationists also struggle with, several speakers pointed out that social and economic inequality can exacerbate efforts to address climate-related problems. Environmental hazards are disproportionately found in low-income areas whose residents often lack the time or economic security to educate themselves about solutions, and funding sources frequently don't adequately cover the entire cost of remediation. What's more, the assistance programs that do exist typically are offered to homeowners, not renters.

Indeed, the lack of adequate or reliable funding underlies many other concerns. Connecticut is fortunate to have a steady source of money outside the general budget for historic preservation, open space acquisition, farmland protection, and affordable housing in the Community Investment Act, passed in 2004. However, the General Assembly has raided this fund in the past to meet general budgetary needs, and the possibility of future sweeps remains a threat. Several speakers called for a lockbox to protect the CIA.

### *There are signs of progress.*

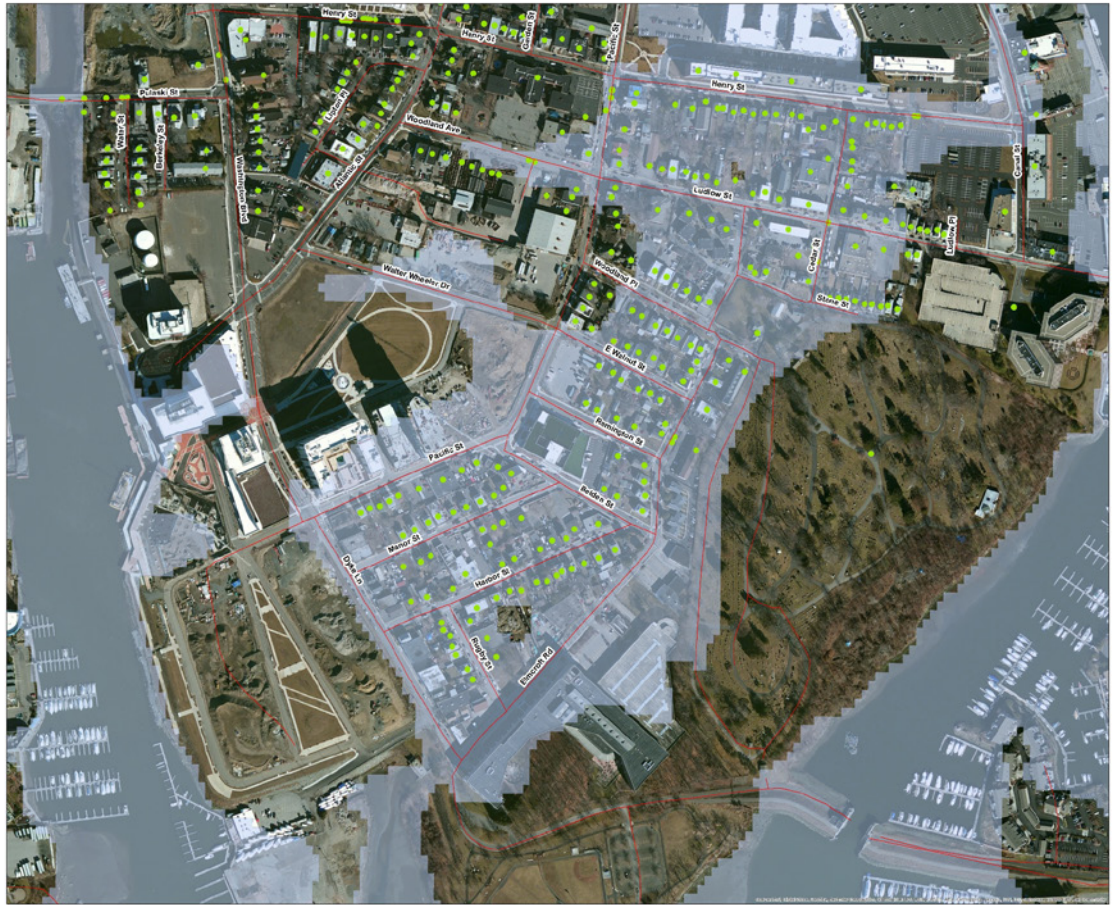
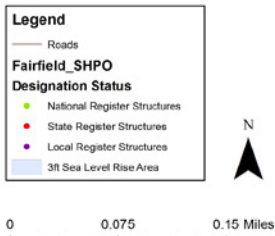
Although the threats posed by climate-related changes are real and serious, the conference showed how progress is being made, and could be made.

First, the variety of people attending the conference and the range of viewpoints presented were greater than at almost any other preservation gathering in thirty years or more. While speakers were honest about disagreements and difficulties, they demonstrated a clear commitment to working together.



To help communities create resiliency plans, the State Historic Preservation Office produced maps showing the effects of expected sea level rise on historic resources. Here, the projected sea-level rise scenario for the South End of Stamford shows a large portion of the South End National Register district is projected to be flooded in 2080

### City of Stamford 3' Sea Level Rise



In the wake of superstorm Sandy, in 2011, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been documenting historic resources in the state's southern counties, fronting on Long Island Sound. The work has included surveys of submerged archaeological sites and historic

dams as well as National Register nominations. This information has supported planning such as flood-surge mapping, outreach to coastal towns, and guidelines for town resiliency plans.

UConn law student Libby Reinish is studying the difficult issue of demoli-

tion by neglect, which she identified as a sustainability issue because it wastes already-existing resources (see Connecticut Preservation News, March/April 2019). She described a new Connecticut law, effective 1 January 2020, which allows courts

*continued on page 6*

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to appoint receivers to take possession of neglected properties in municipalities with populations greater than 35,000 in order to make repairs (PA 19-92). She is investigating other tools municipalities can use to prevent demolition by neglect, such as strengthened or broadened local ordinances or possible application of the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act.

Two Connecticut resiliency projects

were highlighted: In Bridgeport, the state Department of Housing is using a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to plan and construct barriers against flooding in the city's historic South End. The city of Norwich is seeking to promote reuse of historic buildings on the city's waterfront. Because the buildings are in a flood zone, they ordinarily would not qualify for environmental cleanup funding,

but National Flood Insurance Program regulations offer exemptions to designated historic structures.

On the legislative front, a panel of senators and representatives, moderated by Sen. Cathy Osten (a PCT Trustee), discussed climate and preservation related issues before them. The panel—made up of Sen. Christine Cohen, chair of the Coastal Caucus; Rep. Mike Demicco; Rep. Cristin McCarthy-Vahey; Rep. Matt Ritter, House majority leader; and Rep. Jonathan Steinberg—highlighted the work of the General Assembly's Coastal Caucus and expressed support for protecting the CIA and energy efficiency funds from budget sweeps, for new land bank provisions, and for historic rehabilitation tax credits. While not representing the totality of viewpoints at the Capitol, the legislators, by taking time out of a busy pre-session day, affirmed their commitment to preserving Connecticut's environment and its history.

In addition to these Connecticut efforts, speakers broadened the conversation by presenting ideas from other places. Mitigation plans from Annapolis and Boston provide possible models for Connecticut-based planning. In other countries new strategies include zoning to increase density (and reduce new infrastructure), proposing more efficient use of publicly owned properties, and restoring coastal vegetation and natural features such as marshes and dunes that absorb and dissipate flood waters.

### *There are ways forward.*

Throughout the day, the program was punctuated by brief presentations from historic preservation and environmental stakeholders who identified policy priorities. In the final session, attendees discussed proposals for new or improved policies to pursue with the State. A partial list of suggestions follows (for the full list, visit [www.preservationct.org/blog](http://www.preservationct.org/blog)):

#### **Enabling authority ideas**

- Allow local governments to enact deconstruction and demolition-by-neglect laws.

Nearly 200 people gathered at the UConn School of Law, representing preservation, conservation, sustainability, and social action organizations.

A panel of legislators discussed policies to preserve Connecticut's environment and history. From left to right: Sen. Cathy Osten, moderator; Rep. Matt Ritter, House majority leader; Rep. Cristin McCarthy-Vahey; Rep. Jonathan Steinberg; Sen. Christine Cohen, chair of the Coastal Caucus; and Rep. Mike Demicco

Spencer A. Sloan Photography



Spencer A. Sloan Photography



### Funding ideas

- Fight to protect energy efficiency funds and the Community Investment Act.
- For the Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit:
  - Reduce minimum expenditure to increase use in low-income neighborhoods.
  - Expand the program to cover mitigation or adaptation work.

### Regulatory ideas

- Protect the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act against efforts to weaken its protection of natural and historic resources.
- Consider codifying a “light” version of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for use where appropriate.

### Administrative ideas

- Create a State Department of Planning.
- Coordinate historic and environmental programs and projects, from building codes to government reviews.

### Education ideas

- Develop sustainability guidelines for local historic commissions.
- Develop model ordinances to address demolition by neglect and deconstruction instead of demolition.

### What’s next.

The General Assembly session for 2020 began on February 5 and adjourns May 6. A lobby day for historic preservation and the Community Investment Act is scheduled for March 25; for information visit [communityinvestmentact.org](http://communityinvestmentact.org). 🌱

*Historic and Green: A New Climate Agenda* was presented by the University of Connecticut School of Law with Preservation Connecticut, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, the Connecticut chapter of the American Planning Association, and the law firm of Carmody, Torrance, Sandak & Hennessey as co-sponsors. The full list of recommendations and a link to conference videos are posted on [www.preservationct.org/blog](http://www.preservationct.org/blog).

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Contact: Tom Nissley, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices New England Properties, (203) 322-1400, [tnissley@bhhsne.com](mailto:tnissley@bhhsne.com)

## **Pease-Caulkins house** (circa 1660s-1700s), 232 West Town Street, Norwich

The Pease-Caulkins house is one of the few houses remaining in Norwich with connections to the original settlers of the town. Located at the western boundary of the original town plot, the house belonged to John Pease, then passed to Hugh Caulkins, grandson of Norwich founder Deacon Hugh Caulkins. The house dates to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is 1-1/2 stories high and has a massive central chimney, a gambrel roof, and a leanto. Located in the Bean Hill National Register district, the house has seen modernizations over the years and is in disrepair but could be restored using state and/or federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. Prior use was residential, but it is ideally located for adaptive reuse since the parcel is zoned commercial. 3 bedrooms, 1 bath; 2,731 square feet; 0.54 acres. List price, \$150,000.

Listing agent: Hugh Schnip, NAI Elite, LLC; (877) 327-3755 x 208; [hschnip@naielite.com](mailto:hschnip@naielite.com)







Photo Preservation Connecticut



#### Deadline for the next issue is April 17, 2020

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### Capitol Theatre (1921)

**35-41 Bank Street, New London, CT**

Once an entertainment mecca for vaudeville performances, this landmark theatre is a contributing resource to the historic Downtown New London National Register district, close to train and ferry lines. The elaborate façade has a graceful, expansive arched opening at the ground floor; above it, Palladian inspired windows are framed by giant pilasters and an applied entablature. The interior, though in need of restoration, retains distinctive details such as proscenium surround, ceiling moldings, and box seats. Vacant since 1974, the theatre was reroofed in 2010. With 11,000 square feet on both basement and ground levels and a 3,500 square foot mezzanine, it has the potential for reuse as a theatre venue or new adaptive uses. Project may be eligible for both federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, with a premium on state credits as the property is located in an Opportunity Zone. List price \$799,500.

Contact: Connie Howard at US Properties, 860-437-0101; [chowardusp@gmail.com](mailto:chowardusp@gmail.com)

### Reliance Yarn Co.

**(c.1849 with early 20th century additions)**

**556 East Main Street, Norwich CT**

During the first hundred years of its history, fishing line, silk ribbon, woolen goods, and yarn were variously manufactured at this factory. The most recent occupant, Trinacria Specialty Manufacturing, produced supplies for textile mills. The main wood frame loft has large window openings, 14-foot ceilings, and flexible open floor space. The building has 25,000 square feet of space across three floors and was recently reroofed. The 0.85-acre lot is located in a multi-family residential district adjacent to a school. While not listed on the State or National Register, if determined to be eligible, rehab could be incentivized with historic tax credits, and a premium on state historic tax credits due to its location in an Opportunity Zone. Offered at \$495,000.

Contact James McCall at Coldwell Banker Commercial, 203-376-9650; [james.mccall@cbcncr.com](mailto:james.mccall@cbcncr.com).



## Briefly Noted



PCT file

### Danbury. ▲

Thanks to an anonymous donor, the City of Danbury is setting up a preservation fund for city-owned historic sites. Although the amount has not been determined, with a planned match from the City and other fundraising the goal is to reach \$5 million. Income from the fund could then be used for repairs and upkeep to such sites as the former First Congregational Church (1909), which Mayor Mark Boughton hopes to convert to an arts center; the Charles Ives birthplace (1780; NR), operated by the Danbury Historical Society; Tarrywile Mansion (1895; NR), an event venue in a city park; the Octagon house (1852; NR), bought by the City in 2015 for community offices; and the Richter house (1937; SR, pictured), used for music and dance programs.

### Glastonbury. ►

Residents are organizing to preserve the remains of one of Connecticut's oldest industrial sites.

The Hartford Manufacturing Company built a four-story cotton mill in 1814 on Roaring Brook in what came to be called Cotton Hollow. The mill closed in 1920 and burned a few years later, but its granite walls still stand on private land within sight of the Cotton Hollow Nature Preserve. Recently, hikers noticed machinery packing up building stone on the property; a newly cleared drive leading to the mill ruins suggested



R. Tribert

that they too would be dismantled. Officials halted work under the town delay of demolition ordinance. In the meantime, residents launched a petition on Change.org, along with Save the Mill pages on Facebook and Instagram. On February 11, the town council authorized the town manager to work with the owner to find a way of preserving the ruins.





### ◀ Hartford.

Historic houses of worship, often landmarks in their communities, are among their most threatened historic resources. But a bright spot is found in downtown Hartford. The First Church of Christ, built in 1807 at the corner of Main and Gold Streets (NR), just completed a \$2 million steeple, bell, and clock restoration. Working with a recommendation from its consultants, the national organization Partners for Sacred Places, the church has launched a new, secular, nonprofit organization called The 1636 Heritage Partnership, solely dedicated to restoring and maintaining the Meeting House and the 1909 Church House. In addition to fundraising, the new organization will promote the appreciation of the history and architecture of the church buildings.

### ▼ Meriden.

Many historic dams, constructed to power mills and factories, can contribute to sustainability by generating hydroelectric power. The New England Hydropower Company (NEHC) recently received certification from the Low Impact Hydropower Institute (LIHI) for its hydropower installation on the dam at Hanover Pond, where an Archimedes screw turbine installed generates power while allowing fish to pass safely. Criteria for certification include ecological flow regimes, water quality protection, fish passage and protection, watershed and shoreline protection, threatened and endangered species protection, cultural and historic resource protection, and recreation. Although the Hanover dam is not historic—the original dam built in the 1850s for the Meriden Cutlery Company was completely rebuilt in 2005, and the factory buildings were razed long ago—the pond itself remains as a recreational resource and

a reminder of Meriden's industrial heritage. NEHC currently has projects in development at two mill sites in Rhode Island and a canal system in Pennsylvania, demonstrating the technology's potential for use at historic sites. In addition, LIHI has certified hydropower installations at historic dams in Norwich, Thompson, Putnam, and others.

New England Hydropower Company



*continued on page 12*



cont'd from page 11

Merritt Parkway Conservancy



## Merritt Parkway. ▲

Senator Richard Blumenthal has asked providers of GPS navigation software to add warnings to keep trucks off roads on which they are banned, such as the Merritt Parkway (1934-1940; NR). Since the Merritt was built for noncommercial traffic, many of its bridges are too low for trucks, and errant vehicles have damaged bridges, in addition to blocking traffic. The West Rocks Road bridge in Norwalk (shown in photo) is one of the most frequently struck. State police report that many violators of the truck ban have been employing GPS servers that do not provide warnings. At a press conference held on January 13, Senator Blumenthal announced that he along with Senators Charles Shumer and Edward Markey had issued a letter to GPS providers asking them voluntarily to provide height and weight restrictions through their services. If the providers do not comply, the senators will initiate legislation requiring them to do so.

New Canaan Preservation Alliance



## New Canaan. ▲

Plans for a new town library call for demolishing the historic library building, originally constructed in 1913 and enlarged several times. Designs by Centerbrook Architects show the new building erected at the other end of the block; the current library site would be used as public outdoor space. The website for the new library makes no mention of the old building or any thought given to retaining any of it, and The New Canaanite news website quotes the library director as minimizing the building's significance since it has no official historic designation. The 1913 section is a Colonial Revival structure built of stone to designs by a local architect, Alfred Taylor.





### Newtown. ▲

Residents celebrated in January when developers withdrew a rezoning application which would make possible a 40-unit apartment development in three new buildings at 19 Main Street, within the Newtown Borough National Register district, also a local historic district. The project would entail demolishing a 19<sup>th</sup>-century house and barns formerly home to Mary Elizabeth Hawley, donor of Newtown's library and town hall, plus a school, monuments, and parkland. The house, a restaurant for many years, has been vacant since 2016. The developers sought a new overlay zone which residents opposed, arguing that the apartment development would be inconsistent with the historic district and would worsen traffic problems. The Town planning and zoning commission voted in November not to endorse rezoning, and by January it appeared that the Borough zoning commission might not approve the application. However, the Borough commission did not entirely rule out

multifamily development in the area, and the developers could come back with a new proposal. Furthermore, the property remains vacant. As the Newtown Bee noted in an editorial, the community needs

to consider what development it considers appropriate for Main Street in light of its historic character, traffic levels on the busy street, and the realities of the real estate market.



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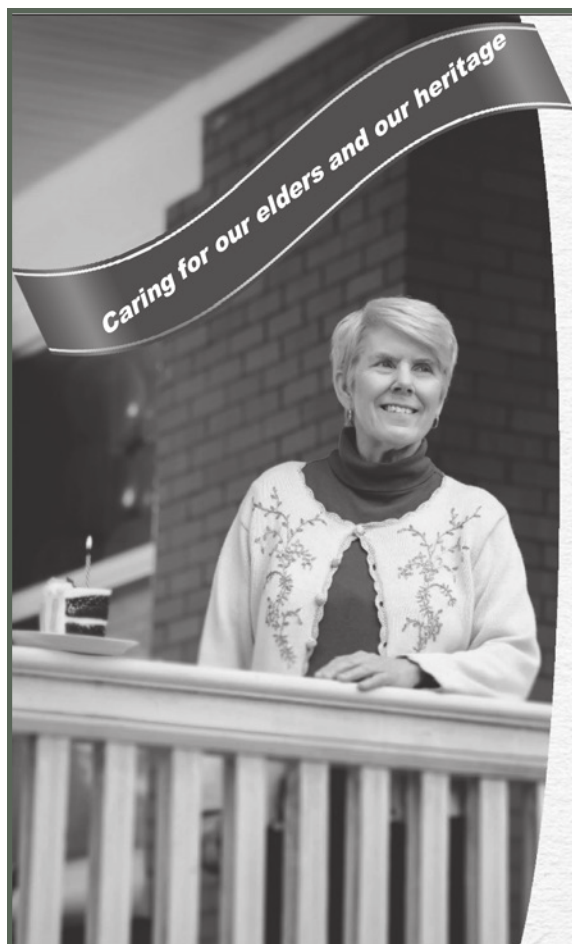
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in order to mount a new attack. Winning the day, the British camped overnight in Ridgefield and buried their dead where they lay on the battlefield. Tryon's report listed 24 British killed and 28 missing. Historians recorded 16 British soldiers and eight patriots were buried in a small field to the right of the American position on the battlefield, although subsequent research offers varying estimates of the dead.

Our working hypothesis is that the burials found under the basement were victims of this historic battle. Material

recovered from two individuals includes 38 brass and pewter buttons, which are in the process of being cleaned of corrosion to assist in determining insignias. The Office of State Archaeology will be assisted in the forensic and artifact identifications by in-state universities, including the University of Connecticut, Quinnipiac University, and Yale University, as well as Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc., and other laboratories around the country. Further information will be forthcoming as analyses continues. 🌱

*Nick Bellantoni is interim State Archaeologist for Connecticut. Scott Brady is president of the Friends of the Office of State Archaeology. This article was reprinted, with permission, from the January 2020 issue of the Archaeological Society of Connecticut newsletter. For more on the battle of Ridgefield, see Farmers Against the Crown, by Keith Marshall Jones III, available from the Ridgefield Historical Society.*

## Historic barns of Connecticut photography show

**S**tart taking your photos! Preservation Connecticut will continue its commitment to Connecticut's barns by welcoming professional, amateur, and student photographers of all ages to submit works featuring the interior or exterior of barns in the following categories: color, black-and-white, detail, and smart phone images for its juried photography show, "Picturing History: Historic Barns of Connecticut." Submissions will be accepted online from June 1 to August 24, 2020. In October of 2020, Preservation Connecticut will proudly display the selected works at the Art League of New Britain's beautiful gallery space in

an historic barn built circa 1870. The show will also travel to Southport, Woodstock, Hartford, and Litchfield County.

Since 2006, Preservation Connecticut has been documenting and helping preserve historic barns in all parts of the state. In a survey carried out from 2006 to

2010 professionals and volunteers recorded more than 8,000 historic barns, most of which can be seen on our website [www.connecticutbarns.org](http://www.connecticutbarns.org).

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## Skeletal remains discovered in Ridgefield may belong to Revolutionary soldiers

By Nick Bellantoni and Scott Brady

**C**onstruction to lower the dirt grade in the basement of a house dating to 1790 in Ridgefield uncovered human skeletal remains in November 2019. Local police were contacted and reported the discovery to the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner, whose forensic team identified the remains as historic and not part of a modern criminal investigation. In turn the state archaeologist was notified to assume the enquiry. In Connecticut, the state archaeologist has statutory responsibility for investigating human remains that are more than 50 years old.

Subsequent excavations, assisted by members of the Friends of the Office of State Archaeology and the Archaeological Society of Connecticut as well as anthropology students from the University of Connecticut, have yielded five skeletons of young, robust, adult males, four of which were hastily buried together in a common shallow grave where the bodies are commingled, with overlapping arms and legs.

The discovered burials are located in the area of the Revolutionary War battle of Ridgefield (27 April 1777), which followed British General William Tryon's raid on Danbury, where his troops destroyed a patriot arsenal and burned a number of houses. As Tryon's companies were marching back to rendezvous with their ships anchored off of Westport, they passed through the town of Ridgefield, where American generals Benedict Arnold and Gold Selleck Silliman erected a barricade at a pinch point along the northern part of Ridgefield to intercept British advancement. Meanwhile, American General David Wooster's regiments were harassing the British rear guard when the general was shot and killed prior to the redcoats' fighting with Arnold's and Silliman's forces.

The British clashed with the patriots at the barricade, driving the defenders into withdrawal to regroup at the Saugatuck Bridge in Westport

Barbara Calogero



Two skeletons found in Ridgefield, possibly casualties of the Revolutionary War battle there.