

# PRESERVATION CONNECTICUT NEWS

## HAPPY 200<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY, FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED!

**A**pril 26 marks the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Connecticut native Frederick Law Olmsted. Born and raised in Hartford, he became an important author, conservationist, and social reformer, as well as the father of American landscape architecture. Olmsted and his firm, which continued to lead the profession for more than a half century after his death in 1903, completed many projects and had many personal and professional ties to the state.

Turn to page 4 for an update on the Connecticut project to document the heritage of the Olmsted firm in the state, as well as information about Olmsted commemorative events in Connecticut and elsewhere. On page 20, we continue our closeups of Olmsted sites with a visit to Beardsley Park in Bridgeport.

C. Wigren

Beardsley Park, Bridgeport

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# An update on Meadowood

By Catherine Labadia, Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office

Citizens of Simsbury and representatives of the Trust for Public Land celebrated the purchase of fields and sheds associated with Martin Luther King, Jr., and other Morehouse College students who worked in the Connecticut tobacco industry.



The tobacco sheds and fields along Hoskins and Firetown roads in Simsbury have long been recognized for their association with a Morehouse College work program facilitated by the Urban League. During the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Black students would be brought from their homes all over the southern United States to work in Connecticut's tobacco industry earning money towards their college tuition.

The most prominent among these students was Martin Luther King Jr., who described his time in Connecticut as an influential experience. As explained in his autobiography, "After that summer in Connecticut, it was a bitter feeling going back to segregation...I could never adjust to the separate waiting rooms, separate eating places, separate rest rooms, partly because the separate was always unequal, and partly because the very idea of separation did something to my sense of dignity and self-respect."

In this sentiment, Dr. King was not alone. A number of newspaper articles, memoirs, and other manuscripts document the impact this experience had on a large number of Morehouse College students. Their stories are a sad reflection of the Jim Crow-era south. Connecticut had discriminatory policies and racist attitudes, but it did

not have segregation and that alone offered some sense of new found "dignity and self-respect" for the thousands of students that came through this work program.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) received an African American Civil Rights Grant administered by the National Park Service to document this location and nominate it for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. An unintended consequence of receiving this grant was that it generated some press coverage, including an article in the November/December 2019 issue of *Connecticut Preservation News* and another in the *Hartford Courant* at the same time. Because of these articles, our office received a call from the Trust for Public Land. They had been contacted about acquiring the property for open space, but they were not fully aware of its historic association. The sheds and fields were part of an almost 300 acre residential subdivision approved in 2009 named Meadowood. Although the project did not move forward then, the threat of this or other development prompted calls to the Trust for Public Land.

While a land conservation acquisition can provide protection to archaeological sites that might otherwise be lost to development, land conservation generally does not align with the rehabilitation or maintenance of structures and buildings.

Fortunately, the Trust for Public Land recognized the cultural, as well as natural, value of the property and forged a relationship with SHPO to protect both the land and its remaining tobacco sheds.

The Trust for Public Land shouldered the burden of negotiating a purchase price with the property owner and pulling together grants and funding from the federal government, state agencies, non-profit organizations, and private donations. The remaining gap amounted to approximately 2.5 million dollars and would be the responsibility of the Town of Simsbury. The town's Board of Finance did not approve the money in its annual budget and a petition brought the matter to a town referendum. During May of 2021, the referendum passed with 87 percent of voters in favor of the expenditure to preserve Meadowood. A resounding outcome for any vote, but truly extraordinary given the current political climate. On October 16, 2021, the Trust for Public Land and Town of Simsbury held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the land transfer.

A collective sigh of relief was short lived. Even with the best preservation outcomes, there are still hurdles. During the period of trying to negotiate and fund

*continued on page 19*

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We were pleased to open the February issue of *Connecticut Magazine* and see that Regan Miner, one of Preservation Connecticut's Trustees, and her husband, Dayne Rugh, made the magazine's "40 under 40" list for 2022! Regan is executive director of the Norwich Historical Society, and Dayne is the director of the Slater Memorial Museum at the Norwich Free Academy. Together, in the words of the magazine, they "are keeping local and international cultures alive and vibrant in eastern Connecticut." Of course, we at PCT already knew Regan was an up-and-comer—in 2018 she received the Mimi Findlay Award, which honors young preservationists.

Also in February, the special working group on the protection and preservation of historic properties submitted its report to the Commerce Committee. Established last year pursuant to Special Act 21-13, the group was charged to develop a plan for supporting and facilitating efforts by municipalities, historical societies, and other nonprofit entities whose purposes include historic preservation to preserve

buildings, structures, objects, sites, and landmarks listed on the National Register of Historic Places or designated by a municipality as historically significant. Due to the time constraints placed on the working group, this report provides a framework for future consideration for developing toolkit and findings for the establishment of an historic preservation revolving loan fund. I was a member of the group, along with representatives of the State Historic Preservation Office, historical societies, museums, and economic development groups.

As I write this, we're beginning to receive nominations for the 2022 Connecticut Preservation Awards. With the latest variant of Covid-19 subsiding, we're going ahead with plans to hold our annual awards presentation in person on May 4, at the New Haven Country Club in Hamden. Of course, we'll be following the latest recommendations from the CDC to keep our members and award recipients safe. Look for an email invitation to come soon or visit our website for details.

Stay tuned for a program announcement regarding the intersection of affordable housing and historic preservation. Staff is working with colleagues and partners on a panel discussion to demystify the topic and demonstrate that the two strategies can work well together.

Also coming up is the opening of our photography contest, on June 11 at the New Britain Art League. The focus this year is historic landscapes, in recognition of Frederick Law Olmsted's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday. The opening event will include a tour of nearby Walnut Hill Park, one of Olmsted's designs.

Lastly, a special thank you to Juan D. Coranado, assistant professor of Public History with the Latin American, Latino and Caribbean Center (LALCC) at Central Connecticut State University, for generously helping us create a bilingual grant application and instructions for the Stamford South End capital grant described on page 6. 🌿

—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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Editor, *Historic Properties Exchange*:  
Kristen Hopewood  
Advertising: Christopher Wigren  
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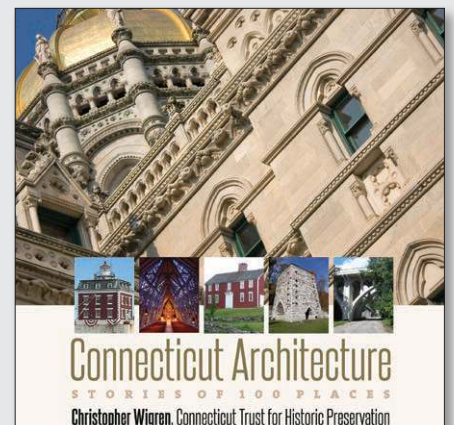
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# Olmsted in Connecticut survey continues

Stone walls and white oak trees line this carriage road at Long Hill, the Wadsworth estate in Middletown.

**W**orker housing, great estates, college campuses, burial plots, industrial sites, and lots of parks all figure in the sites being documented through the Olmsted in Connecticut landscape documentation project being carried out by Preservation Connecticut, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, and consultants from the Red Bridge Group in observance of the 200th anniversary of Frederick Law Olmsted's birth.

In December, the consultants delivered 131 draft survey forms for Olmsted designed landscapes across the state. The sites dated from the 1860s to the 1970s and their condition ranged from nearly intact to obliterated. Even where works no longer exist, information about their creation and design can add to our understanding of the firm's work in the state and in some cases may help us better understand other extant sites.

When the delivered the draft survey forms, the consultants offered a few preliminary observations about them. They noted, for instance, that many of the firm's

works date to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time when Connecticut cities were growing rapidly and considering how to incorporate the many new immigrants into American culture—raising parallels to present-day concerns. The consultants also were able to follow connections between neighbors, business acquaintances, and relatives who commissioned projects from the firm. They were able to begin seeing many of the same design principles at work in different types of projects. And, they noticed that clients often began worrying about costs about halfway through the execution of a project—and that the landscape architects, while addressing those worries, consistently stressed the importance of carrying out the project the way *they* had designed it. These observations will be fleshed out as the documentation project continues.

While PCT and SHPO staff reviewed the draft survey forms, the consultants began the context statement, an extended essay that will provide an overview of the Olmsteds' connections to Connecticut. The context statement will document Frederick

Law Olmsted's birth, upbringing, and education in Connecticut, as well as ongoing relations with Olmsted family and friends in the state. It will also look at the firm's landscape designs here and how they fit into the broader context of the Olmsteds' national—and international—work.

The current schedule calls for delivery of the final survey forms and context report in early summer. In the meantime, PCT and SHPO staff are thinking about how the results of the project will be put to work. They hope eventually to share the information in printed and digital formats. In addition, a series of events is being planned to publicize and celebrate the project. A big kickoff event is planned for the first weekend in October. We'll gather in Waterbury's Fulton Park to celebrate the completion of the project and recognize owners and stewards of Olmsted landscapes across the state.

Some smaller events are already in the works: PCT staff will participate in a summer camp program at the Eli Whitney Museum in Hamden focused on East Rock Park, where the Olmsted Brothers worked in the 1920s. PCT and SHPO are putting together public presentations on the Olmsted heritage in Connecticut and on historic landscape preservation, which can be offered to local historical societies, garden clubs, civic organizations, and others. SHPO is looking to coordinate with the state tourism office and looking for local partners to help arrange tours of Olmsted sites.

For updates and more information, follow Preservation Connecticut's social media or visit [www.preservationct.org/olmsted](http://www.preservationct.org/olmsted). 🌿



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C. Wigren

Join in the celebration of Frederick Law Olmsted's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday. In addition to the Olmsted in Connecticut events planned by Preservation Connecticut and the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, other groups are offering events as well. Here are a few that are already on the schedule.

November 2021-March 31, 2022:

**Women of Waveny: Artists, Patrons, and the Lapham Legacy.** Exhibition, New Canaan Museum and Historical Society. Information: [nchistory.org](http://nchistory.org).

January-May 22:

**The Poetry of Nature: Hudson River Landscapes from the New York Historical Society,** exhibition with related events, New Britain Museum of American Art. Information: [nbmaa.org](http://nbmaa.org).

April 22:

**The Olmsted Legacy in Connecticut: Building Sustainable Cities.** Conference sponsored by the University of Connecticut, 8:30-4:00 at the Hartford Club, 46 Prospect Street, Hartford. Information and registration: <https://cities.hartford.uconn.edu/olmsted>.

April 23:

**Frederick Law Olmsted's 200th: A Hartford Memorial,** hosted by Connecticut Landmarks, Historic Hartford, and Friends of Keney Park. Lecture and tours, 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. 211 High Street, Hartford. Information: [ctlandmarks.org](http://ctlandmarks.org) or [www.facebook.com/HistoricHartford](https://www.facebook.com/HistoricHartford).


April 26:

**Olmsted's legacy in Manchester, Connecticut.** Walking tour, 5:30-7:00 p.m. Meet at 146 Hartford Road, Manchester. Information: [www.manchesterlandtrust.org/events](http://www.manchesterlandtrust.org/events).

The National Association of Olmsted Parks is coordinating Olmsted-related events all over the country and throughout 2022. For listings and a wealth of information about Frederick Law Olmsted and his firm, visit [olmsted200.org](http://olmsted200.org).



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## Grants provide some mitigation for Stamford demolition

As the result of a mitigation agreement between the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office and developer Building and Land Technology (BLT), Preservation Connecticut is administering a \$100,000 fund to provide capital funding for historic preservation projects for owner occupied-homes or small multi-unit buildings that are contributing resources to Stamford's South End National Register historic district.

Homeowners can apply for grants up to \$10,000, with a 15 percent match, for exterior work that follows the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Examples of eligible projects includes repairs to siding, roof, soffit, porches, wood windows, as well as painting, installation of storm windows, and façade upgrades.

The fund was established after a years-long battle between preservationists and BLT as the developer sought to destroy two historic houses and half an historic factory the South End. Although preservationists offered convincing evidence that the demolitions were unnecessary, the developer adamantly insisted that the houses at 79 Garden Street and 130 Henry Street had to be removed in order to widen an access road for a new apartment tower, and that half the former Blickensderfer typewriter factory had to be razed to remediate contamination. With deep pockets to fight the neighborhood and statewide preservation organizations, BLT was able to ride out the legal efforts, and eventually reached an agreement with the state Attorney General's office. In exchange for an agreement by preservationists not to pursue a lawsuit under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act, the company provided funding for the grants. BLT demolished the two historic houses in August.

The initial deadline for applications was March 15. A steering committee consisting



One of two houses razed in Stamford's South End. As mitigation, the developer donated funds for grants to area homeowners.

of representatives from the Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, Historic Neighborhood Preservation of Stamford, the Stamford Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, the State Historic Preservation Office, and Preservation Connecticut will review applications and announce decisions by April 15.

If the first round of grants does not exhaust the funds, more rounds will be offered; after eighteen months the program will be opened up to owners of historic properties elsewhere in Stamford. Preservation Connecticut will not receive any remuneration for administering the grants. 🌿



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# Historic New England to offer new preservation grant in Connecticut

Owner-occupants of historic private homes in key Connecticut cities will have a new source of support in the Edward F. Gerber Urban Preservation Fund, offered by Historic New England.

The fund has been established by a gift from Edward F. Gerber, a member of Historic New England's board of trustees, as well as of the board of trustees of Preservation Connecticut. It will provide an annual grant of \$10,000 to a private homeowner for preservation planning or physical repairs.

Eligible properties must be listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places and be located in Bridgeport, Hartford, Manchester, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwalk, Stamford, Waterbury, or West Haven. Twenty-seven percent of Connecticut's population live in these urban centers. From the pattern of streets to the network of public spaces and the diverse character of commercial

and residential buildings, these cities reflect centuries of development and contain critical spaces for vibrant, engaged communities to thrive. "A lot of the energy in urban areas is from people investing in and restoring older houses," says Mr. Gerber.

Preserving an older dwelling requires an understanding of historic building techniques, specialized trades, and traditional materials, which can be a challenge for homeowners. By providing grants, the fund will support thoughtful decision-making about historic home maintenance and restoration. Property owners who receive a grant will also receive support and guidance from



A new grant from Historic New England will fund repairs to historic houses in Connecticut cities.

Historic New England's staff, ensuring that projects enhance the buildings' historic significance and will stand the test of time.

Connecticut Circuit Riders will add the Gerber grants to the array of resources that they highlight for property owners across the state and will steer likely projects to Historic New England for consideration. 🌿

*Applications for the first round of grants will be available June 1 and due by August 15. For updates, visit [historicnewengland.org](http://historicnewengland.org) and type Gerber in the search box, or contact the Connecticut Circuit Riders through [preservationct.org](http://preservationct.org).*



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# New listings on the National Register

Three Connecticut sites have recently been added to the National Register of Historic Places. Between them, they represent the attraction of rural areas for tourism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the growth of industrial cities in the 20<sup>th</sup>. Designation provides an easily accessible source of historical information, guides planning, and allows sites to qualify for financial incentives for rehabilitation.

Overlooking the main street in New Preston (within the town of Washington), the **Harry O. Erickson Pavilion Hall** was the social center for the village, offering plays, dinners, and dances to residents as well as visitors to the inns and summer houses around Lake Waramaug. The hall was constructed in 1897 by the Pavilion Club, a group of New Preston property owners organized in order to erect a building “for all proper purposes for which Public Halls are commonly used.”

With the arrival of the Housatonic Railroad at New Milford, only eight miles away, in the 1840s, Lake Waramaug had become a tourist destination for people

seeking summer escape from the dirt, noise, and crowds of the city. Local families rented rooms to visitors, which eventually evolved into hotels and inns, while other visitors built private summer homes overlooking the lake.

The new visitors required entertainment. A race track was built in about 1850, followed by a golf club and yacht club which merged in 1916 to form the Waramaug Country Club. Lectures, concerts, and plays were offered—at first in tents, but by 1895 the effort to construct a permanent hall was launched with the formation of the Pavilion Club.

The Pavilion Hall opened in the summer of 1897, with the performance of the play “Only a Farmer’s Daughter,” on August 11 and 12. There were more plays, dances, and a minstrel show, although the last brought out complaints of “hooligans and drunks.”

The hall continued to serve as a community center. Eventually, use dropped off, and in 1940 the Town of Washington acquired the property for unpaid taxes, and it was used for the post office, the Boys’ Club, and storage of the town fire engine. Gradually the building ceased being used on a regular basis

and sat, mostly vacant, until 2018 when the town voted to sell the building to Michael DePerno and Andrew Fry, who renovated it as a store, PlainGoods. (Adapted from the nomination by Sarah K. Griswold)

An important industrial site is the **Hartford Special Machinery complex** in Hartford, comprising the Hartford Special Machinery Company’s own factory as well as the Stanley P. Rockwell Company factory, begun in 1915 and 1929 respectively and both expanded several times.

The production of specialty machines, machine components, and tools was an important sector of Connecticut’s industrial economy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, providing the basic equipment for the state’s various manufacturers. In 1947, the Connecticut Department of Labor reported that the machine industry was the state’s largest employer, accounting for eighteen percent of manufacturing employment.

The Hartford Specialty Machine Company was organized in 1912 by mechanical engineer and inventor Joseph Merritt along with two prominent attorneys,

Jessica Lewis



Pavilion Hall, New Preston



Stanley Rockwell Company factory, Hartford Special Machinery Company complex, Hartford



Ernest Walker Smith and Herbert Knox Smith. “You name it, we’ll make it,” and “You can’t stump us,” were early company watchwords. By 1915 the company moved from leased space to its own purpose-built factory on Homestead Avenue.

In 1916, an article in *The American Machinist* described the company’s work, namely the production of expensive experimental machines that were built to combine several operations. These machines were highly lucrative because they typically fell outside the realm of standardized machines for which there were competitive manufacturers. The wide variety of work required all-around skilled machinists, unlike an ordinary manufacturing plan in which one particular machine was produced.

In 1929 the HSM Company built a new factory across the street for heat treating and metallurgical analysis and consulting, which was managed by the Stanley P. Rockwell Company through a special agreement. Joseph Merritt was president of both companies from 1933 until his death in 1950, and the relationship between them continued until Hartford Special Machinery completed a move to Simsbury, in 1960. Today, a portion of the Homestead Avenue

plant is occupied by the Smith Worthington Company, reportedly the oldest surviving saddle manufacturer in the United States. (Adapted from the nomination by Roysin Younkin, MacRostie Historic Advisors, with Nina Caruso, Crosskey Architects.)

Also in Hartford, the **Aetna Diner** represents changes in the diner industry and diner culture in the years after World War II. Bigger diners, offering more amenities catered to an increasing number of people who dined for leisure, not just for sustenance as was the case in earlier diners located in industrial centers.

The original Aetna Diner opened in 1935 as a small restaurant focusing on rapid service and high customer turnover. Its primary customers were employees at the nearby Aetna Insurance Company. It was started by three Greek immigrants, George Yamoyines, Constantine Vleclides, and Peter Tragakes—taking advantage of the low bar of entry which made diners a popular entrepreneurial option for people of limited economic means and for immigrants who could build and run diners with relatively little restaurant experience or financial investment.

In response to the growing popularity of diners among diverse patrons, the Aetna’s

owners ordered a new and bigger custom diner in 1948 from Paramount Dining Cars, Inc., in Haledon, New Jersey. The new stainless-steel diner was a custom design, shipped in three prefabricated sections to Hartford and assembled on the site. This innovative manufacturing system allowed the new diner to offer a more spacious interior, with more seating at tables and in booths for a more restaurant-like operation. A poured concrete basement became a “ratskeller” and later a club lounge, and a brick kitchen was built at the rear.

Like many Paramount Dining Cars products, the Aetna Diner makes extensive use of stainless steel for exterior and interior panels and trim as well as fittings such as light fixtures and the original clock. While Paramount did not invent the idea using steel in diners, it was the only company to clad diners entirely in steel. Stamped out in circles and bands, the steel paneling gives the Aetna Diner a feeling of luxury and modernity which was reinforced by other up-to-date materials such as glass blocks and Formica. (Adapted from the nomination by Michael Forino and Samuel Christensen). 🌿

Crosskey Architects



Ana Ponce, Meier Design Group, LLC



Aetna Diner, Hartford



## Briefly noted

Town of Beacon Falls, 2009

### Beacon Falls. ►

In January the town board of selectmen awarded a contract for demolishing the Tracy Lewis house, former home of a president of the Beacon Falls Rubber Shoe Company. Built in 1916 (perhaps incorporating an earlier structure), it was listed on the State Register. The town bought the house in 2008, with plans to build a community center and library. In 2010 the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation (now Preservation Connecticut) provided a grant for a feasibility study which recommended preservation and reuse of the house as a viable option for the library. However, none of the plans were realized, and the building was allowed to fall into disrepair. Michael Krenesky, president of Beacon Falls historical society, municipal historian, and a selectman, mourned the decision. "Outside of the Historical Society, there has been little interest from the community to save the building. Over the dozen years the Town has owned this property, we found that there was limited real funding available to move forward with a restoration. This was primarily because our major challenge to finding funding was that previous Town administrations could not decide how we might utilize the building so we could apply for grant funds appropriate to that reuse," he said. "From a historical perspective, it's a shame."



### Bridgeport. ►

The landmark Remington shot tower is looking a bit better, after repairs done for the City. Last year, Bismark Construction of Milford provided structural bracing, installed safety netting, added plexiglass to the window openings, cleaned the interior (hauling away 20 truckloads of debris), removed loose asbestos, and added fencing to keep vandals out—all to stabilize the long-vacant structure, built in 1908-1909 to produce lead shot for the Remington Union Metallic Cartridge Company. Of course, this work was just a beginning—the tower still needs a permanent owner, a use, and a complete renovation. However, this investment demonstrates the city's commitment to its preservation, even while continuing to demolish historic factory buildings on the site in hopes of attracting new development.







John Harrington

### ◀ Norwalk.

The city Historical Commission has overseen repairs to the stone wall surrounding the Kellogg-Comstock cemetery. The wall had been in poor repair, and over the summer some of the stones were stolen. According to David Westmoreland of the Norwalk Historical Society, the cemetery dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although it only has nine gravestones, the state archaeologist has found more than 30 unmarked graves. Other New England states have laws specifically protecting stone walls; however, Connecticut does not, according to the University of Connecticut Stone Wall Initiative, at [stonewall.uconn.edu](http://stonewall.uconn.edu). Restoration was funded by the Norwalk historical commission and carried out by stonemason Greg Faillaci; the work cost just under \$5,000.

### ◀ Stonington.

With rocky hillsides overlooking Quiamabaug Cove, an 18<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse, and historic barns, Wehpittituck Farm is one of Stonington's most scenic spots. It's also a working farm, operated by Jimmy Moran, who sells produce, flowers, and eggs raised there, operating on a lease from David Rathbun, whose family has owned the property since 1650. This past year, Mr. Rathbun sold the development rights to the farm to the Connecticut Farmland Trust, ensuring that the land cannot be developed. The Trust raised funds from federal and state farmland protection programs, as well as the town's open space fund, and received contributions from neighbors. Wehpittituck is one of six farms where the Connecticut Farmland Trust provided protections during 2021; for more information visit [ctfarmland.org](http://ctfarmland.org).

*continued on page 14*



ConnecticutBarns.org

## Upcoming Meetings

### Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

April 6, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

— Virtual Meeting

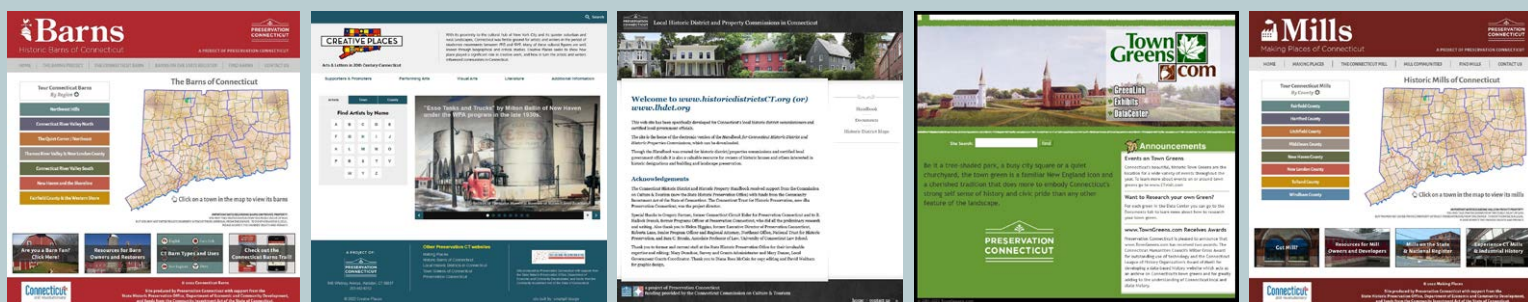
May 4, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

— Virtual Meeting

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

For more information call (860) 500-2343





## Grant from Connecticut Humanities for website upgrades

Connecticut Humanities, the statewide, nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has awarded Preservation Connecticut a \$5,000 Connecticut Cultural Fund Operating Support Grant (CTCFOSG).

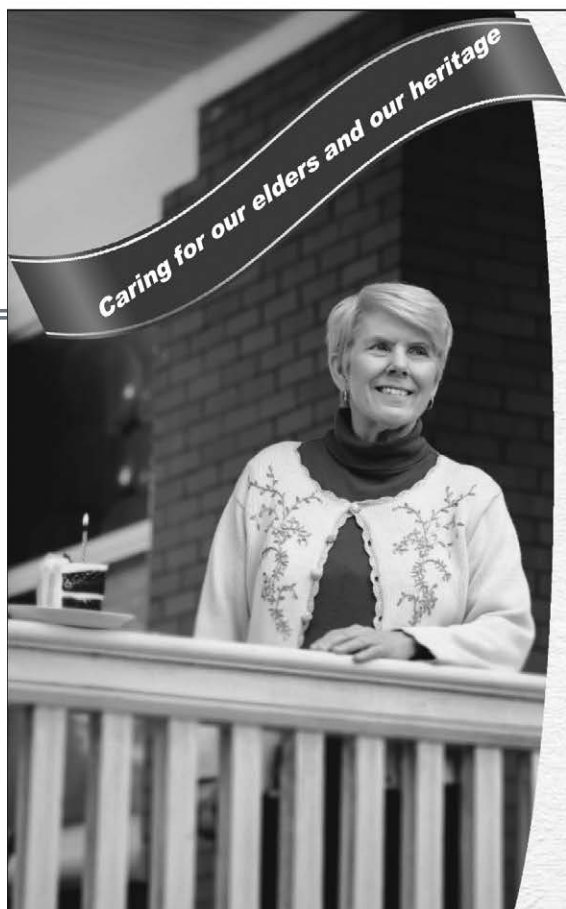
The funds will be used to upgrade our five websites associated with surveys of historic places across the state including town greens, barns, industrial mill buildings, local historic districts and the places associated with 20<sup>th</sup>-century artists and

writers. The websites are an important tool for outreach, attracting thousands of users every month. Updating them to be even more user friendly and modern will allow us to reach a broader community to promote the importance of Connecticut's historic resources.

Preservation Connecticut was one of 624 organizations in Connecticut that was awarded Connecticut Cultural Fund support totaling \$16 million from Connecticut Humanities (CTH). The

grants are part of \$30.7 million of support allocated to arts, humanities, and cultural nonprofits through CTH over the next two years by the Connecticut General Assembly and approved by Governor Ned Lamont. The CTCFOSG will assist organizations as they recover from the pandemic and maintain and grow their ability to serve their community and the public.

This grant was administered by Connecticut Humanities. Funding comes from the Connecticut State Department of Economic and Community Development/Connecticut Office of the Arts from the Connecticut State Legislature. 🌿



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# Talking about Preservation videos online

**D**id you miss one of Preservation Connecticut's Talking about Preservation presentations? It's not too late. These noontime Zoom sessions offer opportunities to hear from and chat with experts in a variety of preservation-related fields, from history to archaeology, to building maintenance. Each session is recorded and posted on PCT's YouTube page for watching. Here is a list of programs offered this winter:

**January 19:**

**Prophet of place: George Dudley Seymour's vision for Connecticut's environment.** Historian and preservationist William Hosley told the story of George Dudley Seymour, a Progressive Era champion for urban parks, city planning, and historic resources and how he taught Connecticut to preserve and wisely use its cultural heritage.

**January 26:**

**Meet the Circuit Riders—and new staff!** Preservation Connecticut Circuit Riders described some of their work around the state and answered questions. Our newest Circuit Rider, archaeologist Stefon Danczuk, fielded a number of questions about resources for buried resources.

**February 9:**

**Proactive Preservation: Connecticut Landmarks combats a changing climate.** Shawn Beckwith, property manager for Connecticut Landmarks, discussed maintenance for historic buildings. With observations and guidance from Historic Scotland, he also spoke about being mindful and taking action for maintenance in the context of a changing climate.

**February 16:**

**Protecting Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy in Connecticut.** Three staff members from the State Historic Preservation Office—Cathy Labadia, Todd Levine, and Deborah Gaston—talked about the years-long effort to preserve a site associated with Dr. Martin Luther King in Simsbury, where

his experiences working on a tobacco farm helped shape his identity as a future leader in the American civil rights movement. When development plans threatened resources related to Dr. King's time in Simsbury, the State Historic Preservation Office, the Trust for Public Land, and the Town of Simsbury led a campaign to pause development plans and save tobacco fields and remaining tobacco sheds (see page 2).

**February 23:**

**History from below: Discovering Benedict Arnold's New Haven house site.** Robert S. Greenberg, Executive Director of Lost in New Haven; public historian Laura A. Macaluso, Ph.D.; and Connecticut State Archeologist Sarah Sportman described the ongoing archeological work to uncover remnants of Benedict Arnold's former New Haven residence, currently buried under a parking lot, and thereby learn something about his life.

**March 2:**

**African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund.** Lawana Holland Moore, Program Officer for the African American

Cultural Heritage Action Fund at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, discussed this multi-year, \$50 million dollar initiative to identify, elevate and support the voices, stories and places of African American activism, achievement, and community. She also spoke about the Fund's Preserving Black Churches grant program which provides direct and targeted funding and assistance to Black churches for staffing and operations, create an emergency fund and help churches develop digital storytelling and documentation strategies.

To watch the videos, visit [www.PreservationCT.org](http://www.PreservationCT.org) and click on the YouTube symbol at the bottom of the page. In addition to these programs, recordings from 2020 and 2021 are also available, along with awards presentations and other events. If you have suggestions for topics or speakers, send them to [StaceyVairo@PreservationCT.org](mailto:StaceyVairo@PreservationCT.org). 🌿



**Talking About Preservation:  
Meet the Circuit Riders- and new staff!**  
Wednesday, January 26th at noon  
A continuation of Preservation Connecticut's weekly  
noontime chats



**Talking About Preservation:  
Protecting Dr. Martin Luther King's  
Legacy in Connecticut**  
Wednesday, February 16th at noon  
A continuation of Preservation Connecticut's weekly  
noontime chats





*News from around the state, cont'd from page 11*

### Vernon. ►

The town council approved a new Cultural District for downtown Rockville in February. According to the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, "A Cultural District is a specific area of a city or town identified by the municipality that has a number of cultural facilities, activities and/or assets—both for profit and nonprofit. It is a walkable, compact area that is easy for visitors to recognize. It is a center of cultural activities—artistic and economic. It is a place in your city/town where community members congregate, and visitors may enjoy those places that make a community special. Because each community is unique, each Cultural District will look different." The proposed district includes a large portion of the Rockville National Register district and includes cultural resources such as parks, the New England Civil War Museum, housed in the Vernon Memorial Town Hall (pictured), and the New England Motorcycle Museum, housed in the historic Hockanum Mill. The district must now be certified by the DECD.



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# Picturing history, picturing landscapes

There still is time to submit photographs to the next Preservation Connecticut photo contest. In celebration of Frederick Law Olmsted's 200th birthday in 2022, we are looking for photographs of Connecticut's historic landscapes—that is, landscapes that have been shaped by human involvement, such as residential gardens and community parks; scenic highways; rural communities; institutional grounds; cemeteries; battlefields; and zoological gardens. And, of course, there will be a category for landscapes by the Olmsted landscape firm founded Frederick Law Olmsted and continued by his sons under the name Olmsted Brothers.

Photographs selected will travel around the state for a year, beginning with the kick-off exhibition at the New Britain Art League, opening on June 11 with a reception and tours of nearby Walnut Hill Park, an Olmsted design listed on the National Register.

Erik Anderson



The deadline for submissions is April 23, but any photographs taken in the past two years are eligible. Find out more at [www.preservationct.org/picturing-history-landscapes](http://www.preservationct.org/picturing-history-landscapes).



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## What will your legacy be?

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE? PLEASE CONTACT JORDAN SORENSEN: [JSORENSEN@PRESERVATIONCT.ORG](mailto:JSORENSEN@PRESERVATIONCT.ORG) OR 203-562-6312





# HISTORIC PROPERTIES EXCHANGE

Threatened Buildings and Easement Properties Available — March/April 2022

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.

## 850 Main Street, East Hartford (1939)

Former United States Post Office available for redevelopment. Colonial Revival building with brick and granite façade and cupola. Listed on Preservation Connecticut Creative Places survey; inside, it houses Alton Tobey WPA mural, "The Stop of Hooker's Band in East Hartford before Crossing the River" (1940). Located in Central Avenue-Center Cemetery National Register Historic District which makes eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 16,561 sq. ft ; 0.73 acres; in Opportunity zone.

**Contact: Shawn P. McMahon, Jones Lang LaSalle Americas, Inc., [shawn.mcmahon@am.jll.com](mailto:shawn.mcmahon@am.jll.com), 860-702-2833**



## 70 Britannia Street, Meriden (c.1890) \$2,200,000

Redevelopment opportunity of historic industrial building. Constructed c. 1890 as saddle harness factory for Chapman Manufacturing Company which occupied the site until 1902. Later occupants include the Connecticut Telephone and Electrical Company, Connecticut Molded Products Corporation, General Electric Company, Commercial Instrument Corporation and the final occupant, Great American Industries. This property is listed in Preservation Connecticut's Mills: Making Places of Connecticut industrial survey and may be eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places and receiving historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 72,970 sq.ft.; 0.97 acres.

**Contact: Michael Beaudry, EXP Commercial, (860) 990-3229, [michael.beaudry@expcommercial.com](mailto:michael.beaudry@expcommercial.com)**



### Deadline for the next issue is April 20, 2022

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.





## 82 Mechanic Street, Stonington (c. 1878) \$595,000

Redevelopment opportunity of historic textile mill on Pawcatuck River. Built by Moss Manufacturing Company for cotton goods production. Later occupants include Crefeld Mills Corporation, Lorraine Manufacturing Company (both manufacturing textiles), Hamilton Propellor, Boston Wire Stitcher Co. (staplers), and the final occupant, Yardney Electric Corporation (batteries). This property is listed in Preservation Connecticut's Mills: Making Places of Connecticut industrial survey and located in the Mechanic Street National Register district, which makes it eligible for both State and Federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 35,000 sq. ft.; 1.49 acres.

**Contact: Heather Gianacoplos, Pequot Commercial, (860) 447-9570 x 153, [heatherg@pequotcommercial.com](mailto:heatherg@pequotcommercial.com)**



## 5 North Main Street, Redding (1901) \$950,000

Former Georgetown Bible Church available for purchase. Built in 1901, this Gothic Revival church was commissioned by Edwin Gilbert of Redding's Gilbert and Bennet Wire Manufacturing Company and originally named Gilbert Memorial Church. Closed in c.2020 after merging with Newtown Bible Church. Features include stone construction with pointed-arch windows, square main tower, and round-ended wing. Located in Georgetown National Register Historic District which makes eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits. Building area is 6,894 sq. ft ; 0.88 acres.

**Contact: Paul Scalzo, Scalzo Real Estate, [commercial@scalzo.com](mailto:commercial@scalzo.com), 203-744-7077**



## Samuel Parker House (c. 1784)

Main house of Caprilands Herb Farm, the former home of Adelmia Simmons, pioneer in 'agri-tourism,' is available for purchase. The house is early Federal style with a center hallway, two chimneys, and timber framing. Must be deconstructed and relocated.

**Contact: Steve Bielitz, Glastonbury Restoration Company, 860-212-3750**

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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*Beardsley Park*, cont'd from page 20

and 1881—it was expanded and revised in 1904 by Olmsted Brothers, the later iteration of the firm under the leadership of John Charles and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. It is the most intact landscape in Connecticut associated with Frederick Law Olmsted and reflects, despite many changes and additions, the key characteristics of an Olmsted park landscape:

- scenery, both what Olmsted called ‘beautiful’—that is, pastoral and peaceful—and ‘picturesque’—irregular and more dramatic;
- large, open meadows at either end of the park, characterized by gently rolling surfaces, enclosed with tree-lined borders and dotted with individual trees or small clusters that cast patterns of dappled shade across the turf;
- generous plantings, designed to alternate between openness and enclosure, shade and sun, to direct or block views, and to create a sense of nature’s bounty;
- water, in the form of Bunnell’s Pond and the Pequonnock River; forming the park’s western edge it offers visual coolness and reflections of the lush greenery; and
- a system of gently curving paths and roadways for vehicular and pedestrian circulation, designed to entice movement through the park.

While natural beauty was the basis of the park’s design, it needed to be carefully shaped to focus on the desired outcomes, with all details subordinated to the overall concept of the landscape. Also, the park had to be designed to accommodate the wear and tear caused by frequent and intense use.

Beardsley Park was not the creation of Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. alone. It may be one of the few in the nation on which John Charles Olmsted, Charles Eliot, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., all worked. Outside the firm, Oliver Bullard, who had worked with the Olmsteds in Brooklyn, was hired by the City of Bridgeport as Superintendent of Parks in 1885 to oversee ongoing construction of both Seaside and Beardsley parks. Bullard’s daughter Elizabeth



Trees overhanging the Pequonnock River form part of the pastoral landscape of Beardsley Park, as seen in this photograph from the Olmsted firm archives.

assisted him, earning Olmsted’s endorsement as a successor to her father after he died in 1890. She did not pursue that job but did go on to become a landscape architect and collaborated with the Olmsted firm on other projects—a career documented by Connecticut landscape architect Oliver Gaffney.

While Hartford was the first city in Connecticut to establish a large public park, Bridgeport’s foresight in creating first Seaside Park and then Beardsley Park made it truly the Park City. 🌿

*Meadowood*, cont'd from page 2

the purchase, three more tobacco sheds were lost along Firetown Road. Since its acquisition the town has done emergency stabilization of all the remaining sheds. SHPO will be assisting them with a grant to put together rehabilitation plans, as well as future implementation. SHPO also will work with the Trust for Public Land on a plan for recreational use and interpretation of the property. Because Meadowood is about more than just the community where it is located, a far-reaching planning charrette to assist with its interpretation is being organized. The hope is to create a



space where we can reflect on the past and who we were, contemplate the present and

who we are, and envision a future for the better people we can become. 🌿





## Connecticut's Olmsted Heritage

Lucy Lawliss, Red Bridge Group



## Landscape for the people: Beardsley Park, Bridgeport

*Editor's note: In 2022 each issue of Preservation Connecticut News features a Connecticut site associated with Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted landscape firm. Material is drawn from the Olmsted in Connecticut landscape documentation project being carried out by Preservation Connecticut, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, and consultants from the Red Bridge Group in observance of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Olmsted's birth.*

**F**rederick Law Olmsted's first experiences in landscape architecture were for the design and construction of Central Park in New York City, and park-making remained an important theme of his career as a landscape architect, and also for the Olmsted landscape firm throughout its existence.

For Olmsted, parks served two important purposes. First, their natural-looking landscapes provided relief for the psyche from the noise, dirt, and stress of the city. He wrote, "...the enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it, tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind over the body, gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system."

Olmsted also saw parks as engines for strengthening American democracy, places where people of all classes could meet on an equal footing, apart from the divisions and competitiveness of day-to-day urban life.

Beardsley Park is the product of two generations of Olmsteds. Initially designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and John Charles Olmsted in 1884—on land donated by James W. Beardsley in 1878

*continued on page 19*