

Searching out Connecticut's Barns

by Todd Levine

Of the five senses, it's said that smell evokes memory like no other. I was reminded of that recently when I made a site visit to an historic barn in Connecticut. The smell of hay warmed by the morning sun brought back memories of a childhood summer at my aunt's farm in Canada. A moment after that sweet memory faded I felt a pang of sorrow, as I thought about how these structures may soon no longer be a part of our heritage.

The Connecticut barn is a symbol of our agricultural origins and often conjures up a feeling of hearth and home for those who live here (especially those returning from a trip via Bradley International Airport and driving by the fields of tobacco sheds). Regrettably, this symbol is in jeopardy. As agriculture in Connecticut has declined and farms have gone out of business, their buildings, no longer needed, sit empty and decaying.

Another threat is demolition by design—in the form of development. When farms no longer generate enough income through their produce, a new way of getting money out of the land is sought. The result is the process of turning farmland into developments that have no place for barns.

James Sexton

The Connecticut Trust has recognized this predicament. Since 2004 the Trust's Historic Barns of Connecticut project has produced a website, a series of information workshops, documentation for nearly 2,000 barns across the state, and a grant program to support historic barns (see pages 5, 6).

Now, the Trust is able to extend and expand its project. Thanks to a two-year grant of \$174,000 from the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, the Trust is pleased to announce the next phase of its survey of significant barns across the entire state. It is the Trust's goal to make this the most comprehensive statewide survey of barns in the country, and this survey could well have an impact



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Middlebury

From the Executive Director

At the end of May, for our fundraiser, *Early American Charm with a European Accent*, Robert Couturier and Jeffrey Morgan of South Kent opened their country retreat to Trust guests to admire. Jeffrey Morgan, an accomplished restoration craftsman, restored an 18th-century house that is now filled with carefully chosen early American antiques. Robert Couturier, an internationally renowned architect and decorator, designed connecting neoclassical buildings to form a wonderfully livable complex complemented by formal boxwood gardens all overlooking North Lake Spectacle. We made new friends while seeing many Trust members, some coming from as far as Greenwich and Thompson. We thank Jeffrey and Robert for their gracious hospitality and our Patrons for their generous gifts: Mr. and Mrs. Walter Fiederowicz, Charles E. Janson, Esq., John C. Novogrod, Philip G. Sampanaro, Robert Svensk, and Hiram Williams and Peter Vaughan.

As with all non-profits, the work of the Trust is enhanced by volunteer interns. Currently, Julie Rosen of Guilford, a senior at the University of Illinois majoring in Civil Engineering, is working on our barns survey. Ed Perzanowski, a journalist, is assisting us in developing our list of Preservation Opportunities for the fall issue of CPN. Both interns are looking at their time here as a way of exploring historic preservation as a career. We like to proselytize with all our interns, to some demonstrated successes over the years, and we hope we will be as successful with Julie and Ed.

As I write in late June, the State's budget for the next two years is still being

Members and friends at the Trust's fundraiser, at the home of Robert Couturier and Jeffrey Morgan in South Kent.



C. Wigen

negotiated. We are unsure of the status of Governor Rell's proposal to merge the Commission on Culture and Tourism into the Department of Economic and Community Development which we oppose, especially for the loss of identity to the State Historic Preservation Office in such a merger. We are also unsure how our line item of \$237,500—which funds our Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants and our Barns Grants—will fare.

We do know, however, that the Community Investment Act (CIA), the biggest source of funding for historic preservation activities in the state, will remain. On the last day of the legislative session, the General Assembly, with key support from Governor Rell, Senate President Pro Tempore Donald Williams, Speaker of the House Christopher Donovan, and House Majority Leader Denise Merrill, passed Bill 891 which expands the CIA for two years to assure the

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The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation is a nonprofit statewide membership organization established by a special act of the State Legislature in 1975. Working with local preservation groups and individuals as well as statewide organizations, it encourages, advocates and facilitates historic preservation throughout Connecticut.

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Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism

Upcoming Meetings of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

August 5, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.
September 2, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.

All meetings take place at the Commission on Culture and Tourism Main Conference Room 1 Constitution Plaza

For more information call (860) 256-2800

New Trustees



G. Farmer

New Trustees (left to right) Serena Bechtel, Robert Svensk, Ruth Harvey, and James Blansfield, with Chairman Jeffrey Muthersbaugh

The Connecticut Trust welcomed four new trustees to its board as of May 1. They bring new knowledge and perspectives to the Trust's work and have already jumped right in.

Serena Totman Bechtel (Greenwich) has been Membership Manager at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage in Los Angeles and an appraiser for Doyle New York and O'Toole Ewald Art Associates, both in New York. She belongs to the Colonial Dames and serves on the Conservation Council of the Greenwich Land Trust and the Board of Putnam Indian Field School in Greenwich. She was educated at Yale University and the Cooper-Hewitt/Parsons School of Design.

James Blansfield (Danbury) is President of Blansfield Builders, a custom building company working in Southwestern Connecticut and Westchester County, and a LEED AP Green Builder. Jim is a Corporator of the Union Savings Bank, president of the Danbury High School Athletic Hall of Fame Committee, and Chairman of the Richter House Restoration Committee. He holds degrees from the University of Vermont and Emory University.

Ruth Harvey (Glastonbury) is President and CEO of Ametis Industries, Inc., a contracting firm whose projects include work at Newark Airport and the Museum of Modern Art. One of her current proj-

ects is to dismantle an historic building and reconstruct it on the waterfront in Brooklyn, New York. Ruth is a graduate of NYC City Community College and the Institute of Design & Construction.

Robert Svensk (Southport), a graduate of Wesleyan University and Harvard Business School, is the founder of several insurance companies specializing in international credit and political risk insurance. He is also Adjunct Professor of International Business at Sacred Heart University. He serves as Chairman of the Southport Conservancy and other non-profit organizations. Trust members may also know him as the father of our former Programs Associate, Hallock Svensk.

May also brought changes to the Trust's officers: **Jeffrey Muthersbaugh** remain

as Chairman and **Walter Fiederowicz** as Assistant Treasurer, but **Edmund Schmidt** became Vice Chairman, **Adrienne Farrar Houel** became Secretary, and **Edward W. Munster** became Treasurer. 🌸

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on federal and state policy and funding for farms and barns.

From our previous work we already have a good idea of the types of barns in Connecticut, their uses, construction methods and relative ages. For example, there are few, if any, 17th-century barns still standing in the state, and surviving barns from the 18th century also appear to be very rare. Most existing barns date from the 19th century, as local agriculture grew to support the state's booming cities and farming became more scientific. In the 20th century, barn building dwindled, paralleling the decline of agriculture; by mid-century, other than tobacco sheds, "hobby" barns and barn-like storage buildings, barn building virtually stopped. So, it is not just that barns are deteriorating or facing development pressures; they are, in fact, becoming an extinct building type in Connecticut.

The biggest lesson from our research is first-hand knowledge of the immense preservation challenge that faces these buildings. Building types lose their economic



Thompson

value when their particular use is no longer needed in the area where they exist. In the case of Connecticut barns, it is not only that agricultural use of barns is in a downward free fall, but also their very presence on valuable land is seen as an intrusion: either a violation of zoning or an obstacle

in the way of new construction.

A complete survey of barns will provide the basis to make the case for protections for these historic resources. The first step in preservation is documentation: know

Case Study:

Colbert Barn, Woodbridge

Erected for Henry W. Chatfield in about 1880, the Colbert barn represents the adaptation of traditional barn types to new construction techniques in the late 19th century. Long a dairy barn, it is currently used as a horse stable and for hay storage. The Connecticut Trust awarded

a Barns Grant in 2008 to Colleen Colbert for a conditions assessment and a State or

National Register nomination for the barn. The conditions assessment, completed by Gibble Norden Champion Consulting Engineers, identified structural issues and made recommendations for addressing them. A nomination to the National Register, prepared by Cunningham Associates, is working its way through the approval process. The nomination includes the entire farmstead.



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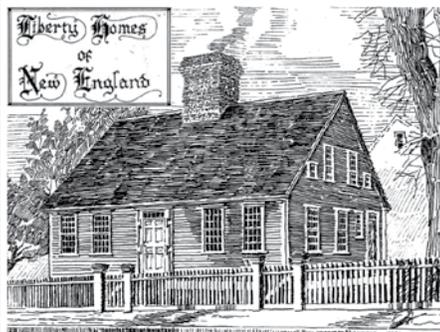
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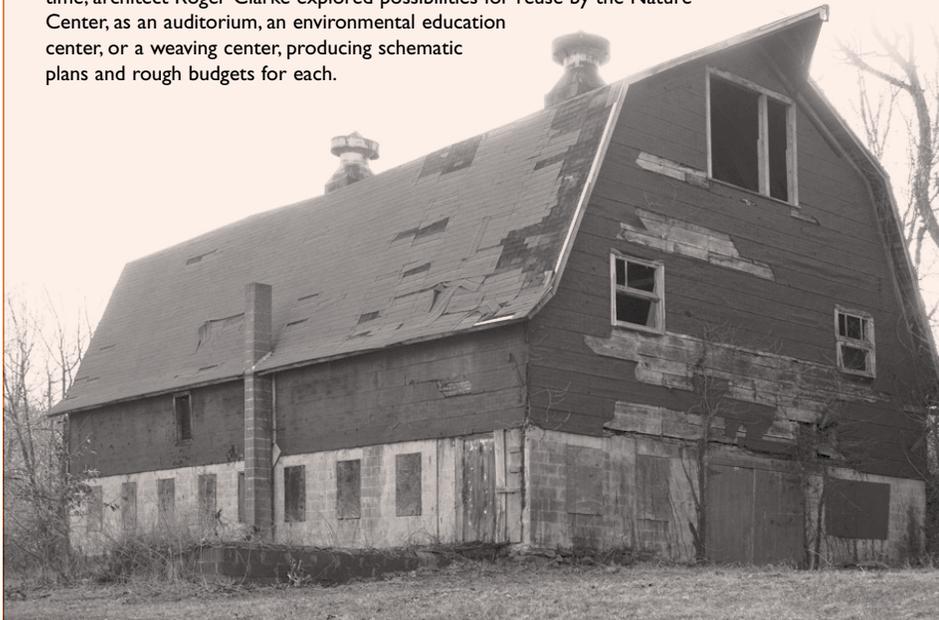
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**Case Study:
The Barn at Werner Woods, Canton**

The Werner barn was built in the 1930s and reconstructed in 1948 after a fire. Originally part of a working dairy farm, the barn is now owned by the Department of Environmental Protection, on property used by the Roaring Brook Nature Center. The Connecticut Trust gave a Barns Grant in 2008 to Canton Advocates for Responsible Expansion (C.A.R.E.) for a conditions assessment and feasibility study for the barn. The conditions assessment, by James K. Grant Associates, identified structural problems and set priorities for addressing them. At the same time, architect Roger Clarke explored possibilities for reuse by the Nature Center, as an auditorium, an environmental education center, or a weaving center, producing schematic plans and rough budgets for each.



what you have and try to understand what makes it important. A statewide survey will give us the big picture so we can see how individual buildings fit into the overall story of agriculture in Connecticut and help us to know which barns are of greatest importance.

In addition to the Trust's work, there have been some other surveys of barns by historical consultants. Old Sturbridge Village surveyed barns in the state's north-

eastern corner in the 1970s. More recently, there have been surveys in individual towns like Redding and Litchfield; currently, a barn survey funded by the CCT is under way in Roxbury. Finally, there have been a smattering of volunteer windshield surveys, particularly in Guilford, Mansfield and Oxford.

Nationally, The National Barn Survey and the National Barn Alliance were created to help grass roots efforts to complete barns surveys. The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Barn Again! program has been a springboard for barn preservation nation-wide and continues to provide information to help owners of historic barns rehabilitate them and put them back to productive use on farms and ranches. Other states doing complete surveys include New Hampshire, New York, Michigan and Iowa.

To carry out this survey, the Trust will target areas within the state that have little or no representation in our database of barns. We will make a list of the towns from these areas and prioritize the order for surveying based on location, need, and current preservation presence. In each area, we will hold a public informational meeting and invite volunteers to help us—including local historians, town clerks, building officials, friends and members of the Trust, historic district commissioners, members of local historic societies, civic groups, granges, schools, cultural centers and other community groups. We will advertise our project to the media locally and across the state.

The volunteers will be divided into two groups: one will help us identify where historic barns are in each town, and the

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John F. Kennedy - October 26, 1963

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other will perform preliminary "windshield surveys," taking photographs and recording locations. The information will be submitted to our database, www.connecticut-barns.org, and subsequently converted into a statewide Historic Resources Inventory.

The Inventory will be used to determine the most significant barns and to prepare a statewide, thematic nomination to the State Register for Historic Places. Data from the Connecticut barn survey can then be compiled at the CCT and shared nationwide to help establish a picture of the number and condition of America's barns. Additionally, adaptive use/mixed use historic tax credits will play a role in finding viable new uses for our barns while other sources of funds will help farmers retrofit older barns for modern uses.

Historic preservation is our best tool for encouraging investment in historic buildings so they remain useful while making visible the rich history and culture of Connecticut. 🌿

Todd Levine, the Connecticut Trust's Preservation Services Officer, will supervise the next phase of the Barns Survey. If you'd like to volunteer, call him at (203) 562-6312 or email to tlevine@cttrust.org. For more information on the Connecticut Trust's barns programs, visit www.connecticutbarns.org.

Sylvia Cancela



Case Study: Sunset Terrace Barn, Collinsville

Built about 1870, this small barn was originally used by the Collins Company to store lumber. The Connecticut Trust gave a Barns Grant in 2008 to the owner, Sylvia Cancela, for a conditions assessment and feasibility study for the barn. The conditions assessment, by James K. Grant Associates, found the building to be in generally good shape, but did identify areas that need minor structural repairs. Local architect Roger Clarke produced schematic plans showing how Cancela's desire to turn the barn into a performance space for the community, with office space for nonprofit organizations might be accomplished.

2009 Barns Grant Recipients

In May the Connecticut Trust funded its second round of Barns Grants, which support efforts to preserve the historic barns of Connecticut. Barns Grants can be used for one or more of the following three purposes: a conditions assessment to determine what needs to be done to restore the structure; a feasibility study, to explore adaptive use options; and/or minor structural stabilization.

The 2009 Barns Grants were funded by the Connecticut General Assembly. More than \$81,000 was granted to 15 applicants:

- Town of Bolton, Bolton Heritage Farm Barn: \$5,000 for stabilization
- Colebrook Land Conservancy, Hale Barn: \$5,000 for stabilization
- Coventry Historical Society, Strong-Porter Barn: \$5,000 for stabilization
- Thompson Family Farm, Applewood Farm Barn, East Windsor/Ellington: \$5,000 for stabilization
- Candlewood Farm Barn, Higganum: \$5,000 for stabilization
- Kent Land Trust: \$6,500.00 for conditions assessment and stabilization
- Academy of our Lady of Mercy, Lauralton Hall barn, Milford: \$5,000 for stabilization
- Gillette Grist Mill, New Hartford: \$5,000 for stabilization
- Weatinoge Heritage Land Trust, Red Barn at Smyrski Farm, New Milford: \$6,500.00 for feasibility study and stabilization
- Old Banker Barn, Anguilla Brook Farms and Gardens, Stonington: \$6,500.00 for conditions assessment and stabilization
- Abercrombie Barn, Mansfield: \$5,000.00 for stabilization
- Wheaton Farm Barn, Washington: \$5,000.00 for stabilization
- Averill Barn, Washington Depot: \$6,500 for conditions assessment and stabilization
- Friends of Ambler Farm, Wilton: \$5,000.00 for stabilization
- Mayer Barn, Woodbury: \$5,000.00 for stabilization

A Connecticut Trust Barns Grant will help fund conditions assessment and stabilization for the Old Banker Barn at Anguilla Brook Farms and Gardens in Stonington.



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Henry Austin: In Every Variety of Architectural Style

by James F. O’Gorman

Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008
(228 pp., 131 illus.) \$35.00.

Long before “less is more,” architecture was a practical trade with occasional flights of fancy. In the 19th century, talented architects, educated in traditional styles and guided by published sources, could draw from a wealth of forms and ornament to create individualized edifices with wide-ranging stylistic roots.

Henry Austin (1804-1891) worked in a period that helped to define the architect’s profession in the United States. His early designs were consciously classical, mimicking the forms, proportions and ornaments that were inherited from ancient Greece and Rome.

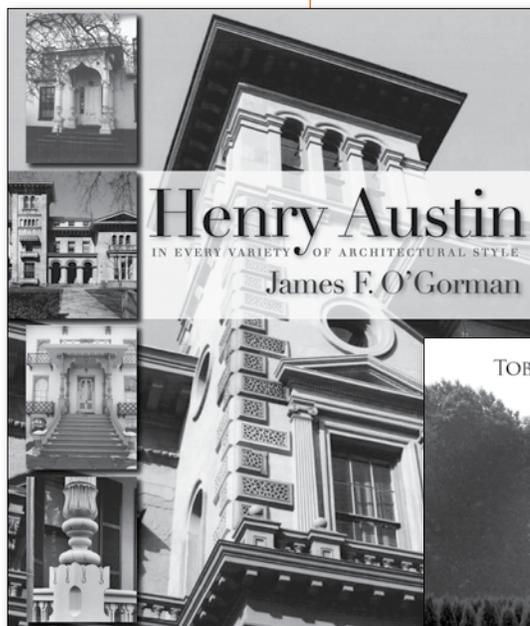
Strict historicism soon yielded to historical eclecticism and Austin incorporated Gothic, Moorish and Indian details into his designs. As form followed fashion, Austin and other architects designed Gothic cottages, Moorish retreats, and Italianate villas. The resulting revivalist styles express the 19th-century search for an appropriate American architectural style rooted in, but distinct from, historical precedents. Asymmetrical elevations, complex rooflines, prominent verandahs, irregular floor plans, and a wealth of ornament add to the visual delight of Austin’s buildings.

The breadth and variety of Austin’s work is truly delightful. Although he is known primarily for iconic structures like the neo-Egyptian entrance to the Grove Street Cemetery in New Haven (1839-47), the exuberantly eclectic Morse-Libby House (1857) in Portland, Maine, and the high-style Victorian City Hall (1860-62) in New Haven, Austin also designed a wide array of homes, churches and commercial buildings throughout Connecticut and beyond.

O’Gorman’s welcome volume brings together the tidbits of information on Austin’s life and work and begins to sketch a more complete picture of the man as architect. The book is divided into chapters that focus on Austin’s major building types: domestic architecture, ecclesiastical architecture, public and commercial buildings, and a section on Austin’s later buildings (after 1860). Ample and informative notes supplement the well written text. Appendices discuss the contents of Austin’s professional library, evaluate his original drawings preserved in the collection of Yale University, and explore the other individuals who were affiliated with his architectural practice.

The book is beautifully formatted for careful reading as well as browsing. The illustrations are large and sharply reproduced. Any reader who has ever admired early Victorian architecture will take pleasure not only in an armchair tour of Austin’s work, but also in observing how his buildings have changed over time. 🌸

—Gregory Farmer



Tobacco Sheds of Connecticut River Valley

by Darcy Purinton and Dale Vahill

Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, Inc., 2009
(143 pages) \$34.99.

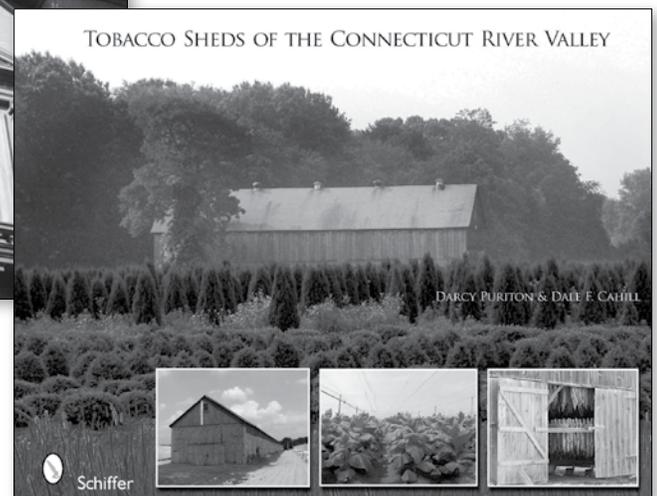
The newly published *Tobacco Sheds of Connecticut River Valley* contains a wonderful collection of photographs of these buildings and is narrated in a casual and engaging style that links the images of the sheds to the stories of the people who created them. The book guides the reader on a journey through the eyes of two photographers, Darcy Purinton and Dale Vahill, and their quest to document one of Connecticut’s agricultural treasures. The authors’ clear love for the tobacco shed is evident through the 200 beautiful photographs taken of the Connecticut River Valley tobacco shed and the process of making cigars.

As picture books go, this one has a preservationist’s sense of sincerity. Not only are the compilation of the photographs impressive and the attention to detail a treat, but the fact that a full two chapters outline the plight of these structures, threatened with demolition by neglect or by design, elevates the book above a common coffee book. Examples of adaptive re-use, both for agricultural and other purposes, remind us that barns do not necessarily have to go to the dump if they are no longer being used as they were originally intended.

The stories of immigrant and local workers “suckering” the plants (pulling undesirable leaves off the plants), the clear description of how tobacco leaves are processed, and the emphasis on the tobacco shed as an important barn type lend a degree of substance to a colorful and cheerful book.

Ultimately, what makes this book a success is the collection of photographs. The often sharp contrast of the man-made sheds against their scenic backdrop evokes a sense of wonder and appreciation. The photographs combine saturation of color with simplicity of composition and make hours of hard work setting up the perfect shot look easy, as if one just strolled up to a scene and took a snapshot. This book would be desirable on the table of any preservationist, barn lover or cigar aficionado. 🌸

—Todd Levine



Robert Gordon

Brad Schide



Medad Stone Tavern, Guilford



The Commercial Trust Company building, New Britain

A Tavern, A Bank, and A Dam

Three sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places illustrate the effects of larger events on Connecticut history, from the politics of road construction, to financial booms and busts, to the vast expansion of the federal government's local role in the 20th century.

Despite its name, the **Medad Stone Tavern**, in Guilford, never actually served as a tavern. It was built as a gamble, in 1800, along the road that Stone, a Guilford tavernkeeper and postmaster, hoped would become a new turnpike carrying traffic from New York to Boston. Unfortunately for Stone, the turnpike was built elsewhere, and his expansive tavern became a farm-

house. It passed down through successive generations of the Davis-Hubbard family until it was willed to the Guilford Keeping Society in 2001.

The little altered house retains its original tavern layout and features, including unusually massive framing (perhaps to accommodate wear and tear of public use), a large kitchen and other work areas, formal parlors for entertaining, numerous bedrooms, and a two-story veranda that wraps around the front and one side.

Family papers held by the Guilford Keeping Society document the property's history, including the division of the house among various family members. When

Joel Davis died in 1861, his will divided ownership of the house's rooms among his survivors. Joel's widow, Acsah, received one-third of the living space, including

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Mansfield Hollow Dam, Mansfield

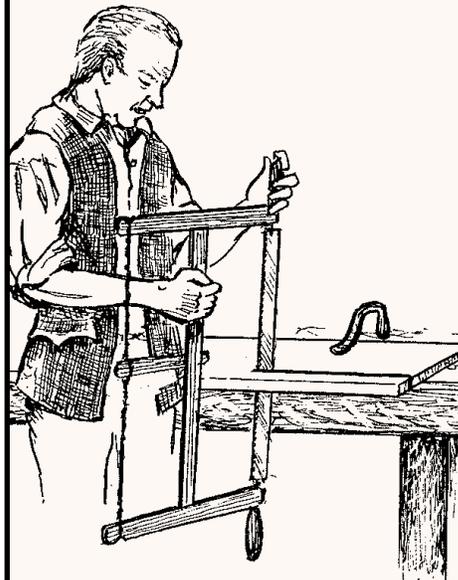
the Smoke Oven room and two bedrooms; she and her daughter Sarah also shared the old kitchen. Sarah received four other rooms on her own. Joel's son Joel Leonard received the first- and second-floor halls and four other rooms. While dividing rooms of a single dwelling among different owners was well known in colonial Connecticut, by the second half of the 19th century it had become very rare.

The house sits among woodlands and pastures surrounded by stone walls. Also on the site are a large barn built in 1898, a 19th-century corn crib, and a garage constructed with timber felled by the 1938 hurricane.

In New Britain, the **Commercial Trust Company building** is a symbol of both the prosperity of the late 1920s and of the hardship that hit financial institutions after the stock market crash of 1929. Organized in 1915 to serve New Britain's booming hardware industry and its employees, the company soon erected a new headquarters on a prominent downtown site. When it opened in November of 1927, the building, designed by the New York firm of Hopkins and Dentz, was featured in a special section of the New Britain Herald.

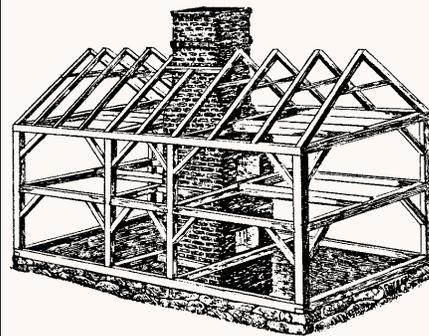
continued on page 10

West River Restoration



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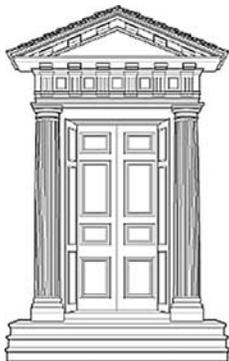
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Designed to express Commercial Trust's strength, stability, and good taste, the building employed expensive materials such as limestone, marble and bronze, along with careful attention to well-coordinated details, such as classical moldings and repeated use of the company's logo, a blacksmith's anvil, all employing a mix of stylistic influences that includes neo-classical, Venetian Gothic, and Italian Renaissance Revival. The banking hall was described as "early Florentine Classic." The seven-story building is the tallest in its streetscape, providing in addition to the banking facilities, rental offices on the upper floors.

Less than two years after the new building opened, the stock market crash decimated financial markets as panicked depositors rushed to withdraw their money. Commercial Trust closed its doors on December 13, 1930. In 1938 the property was acquired by New Britain National Bank, and it continued to serve as a bank until 1996.

The building sat vacant for over ten years, until Aron Eisenberg, a developer from New York, secured equity and debt financing to convert it to 28 apartments for senior citizens, along with ground-floor retail in the banking hall, which still contains the original sconces and chandeliers, and marble walls, as well as much of its brass trim at the doors, bank vault and elevator. A seven-story elevator tower at the back of the building will allow it to meet modern code requirements.

More than one-third of the project's cost will come from Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits, which has meant that the work must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The balance of the financing is coming from Bank of America debt financing, Housing Credits, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, owner equity and the City of New Britain. Residential occupancy is scheduled for April 2010.

The **Mansfield Hollow Dam**, in Mansfield, was the first flood control project constructed by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in Connecticut. After severe floods paralyzed New England in 1936, Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1936, which gave the Corps the responsibility for carrying out a national policy on floor control. Additional flooding caused by the hurricane of 1938 led to the creation of a flood control plan for the Thames River basin, to protect communities and industrial facilities, which had suffered extensive damage. The plan called for seven reservoirs, four located in the upper Quinebaug basin in Massachusetts, and three in the upper Shetucket basin in Connecticut.

The Mansfield Hollow Dam was authorized in 1941, but civil works projects not directly related to World War II ceased in 1943 and did not resume until 1947. Construction at Mansfield did not start until 1949, after the Corps modified its plan to reduce the amount of property taken and the number of houses to be relocated or demolished and eliminated the relocation of two cemeteries—all in response to vocal community opposition in Mansfield. Further delays resulted when bids came in substantially above government estimates.

The dam was completed in 1952 and showed its worth in 1955, when torrential rains from Hurricane Diane fell across southern New England. While flooding still was extensive, the Mansfield Hollow reservoir filled to 67 percent of its capacity and was estimated to have reduced damage by more than \$3 million.

The dam is located on the Natchaug River about five miles above its confluence with the Shetucket River at Willimantic. It consists of a rolled-filled earth dam approximately 14,000 feet long and 15 feet wide, a spillway with a concrete ogee weir, and mechanical works to control outflow. Six earth-fill dikes extend the dam, and provide storage capacity for recreation and flood control. Other related structures consist of a control house, and administration building/garage, and an early 20th-century house used as dam operator's quarters until 2002.

The dam actually was listed on the National Register in 2003, but due to the Army's signoff procedures the listing was not publicly announced June of this year. 🌸

NOTICE OF PUBLIC OFFERING

HISTORIC PONY TRUSS STRUCTURE

The Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) has completed a design for the rehabilitation of Bridge No. 03852, which carries Hales Road over the Metro-North Commuter Railroad in the town of Westport. The proposed construction, which is being performed under State Project No. 158-200, is anticipated to begin in April 2010.

The project involves the replacement of the bridge superstructure, which is a circa 1891 riveted steel Warren-pattern pony truss structure. The trusses span 53 feet between bearings, and the width between truss centers measures 25 feet. The trusses and their connecting floorbeams possess historical and engineering significance. The bridge is featured in ConnDOT's *Historic Bridge Inventory* dated May 1991 and in ConnDOT's 1991 publication entitled, *Connecticut's Historic Highway Bridges*. Connecticut's State Historic Preservation Office has deemed the bridge to be eligible for inclusion in the *National Register of Historic Places*.

ConnDOT is seeking to donate the steel pony truss structure for the purpose of establishing its off-site adaptive re-use. Anyone wishing to take possession of the structure upon its removal must express a bona fide intention to utilize it in a manner consistent with preservation of this historic engineering resource. Interested parties may obtain additional information by contacting Ms. Mary E. Baker, Transportation Engineer at ConnDOT's Bureau of Engineering and Construction, Division of Consultant Design, during office hours, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., excluding holidays, at (860) 594-3402. **This offer will terminate 2 weeks from the date of this publication.**

Unsung Heroes

Environmental Review Teams Aid Municipalities

Reviewing land-use proposals can present challenges to towns, requiring thorough knowledge of the land, its resources, and the probable effects of development. The growing number and complexity of the factors to be taken into account have made it difficult for local volunteer boards to assess the factors that should be considered in making decisions. Among these factors are the value of historic resources—buildings, districts, landscapes and archaeological resources, among other things.

The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection can help towns facing complex land use decisions through its Environmental Review Team program (ERT). This little-known program, which has been operating for 40 years, assists towns by performing environmental reviews of sites proposed for major land use activities or providing natural resource inventories to be used for land acquisition, master planning, or in anticipation of future development pressures.

The ERT draws professionals from a variety of federal, state, regional and local agencies to form multi-disciplinary study teams. Depending on the circumstances of each case, team members may come from DEP, the Office of State Archaeology, the State Historic Preservation Office, Conservation Districts, the Department of Transportation, Department of Health, Councils of Government, or other agencies as needed.

The information and analyses provided aim to assist both towns and developers in making environmentally sound decisions. ERT reports are not meant to compete with private consultants by supplying site designs or detailed solutions to development problems, but they do provide information about the existing resources and evaluate their significance with regard to proposed uses. Recommendations are given, but the report is non regulatory. All final decisions are left to the town and developer.

ERT Coordinator Elaine Sych says, “For historic resources, these reports can provide critical information to towns—identifying things that they weren’t aware of or helping them understand what these resources are.



Connecticut ERT

Environmental Review Team members study the Hewitt property in North Stonington. Based on information collected by the team, the town decided to buy the property.

This can be particularly important where towns are planning a referendum about purchasing a property for open space or other uses.”

One such report concerned the Hewitt property in North Stonington, which was owned by Mystic Seaport. The town requested a natural resource inventory to assist in deciding whether to purchase the property and to provide an information base for managing it should an acquisition occur. Specific areas of concern included: aquifer protection, water quality and water supply, wildlife habitat and management, farmland preservation, recreation potential, and historic and archaeological significance.

A team was assembled, including Nicholas Bellantoni, the State Archaeologist, and David Poirier, the Staff Archaeologist for the State Historic Preservation Office. The team collected information and then met at the site to verify information and to identify other resources. Team prepared individual

reports, which were compiled into a final ERT report.

On the property are several buildings of potential historic importance, including a house built in the 1740s, an early 20th-century restaurant/diner, a long-vacant early 20th-century house that had operated as a nursery school, and a small cabin. The Archaeological and Historical Review section of the report indicates whether or not each appears to be eligible for National Register listing, suggests possible treatments and uses, and indicates where additional information is needed to make a determination.

The town did buy the Hewitt property and is currently using it for passive recreation, under the provisions of the original bequest to Mystic Seaport, which still apply. According to first selectman Nicholas H. Mullane, the ERT report helped the town make the decision to go ahead with the purchase. “North

continued on page 14

Portland. Preservationists from around the state are hoping to convince developers to retain two historic houses as part of a new mixed-use development at the former Elmcrest Psychiatric Institute, a mental hospital located on Marlborough Street (CT 66) in the town center. The hospital closed several years ago, and now developers Anthony Fonda and Fred Hassan are planning new construction on the 14-acre property that will include shopping, offices, restaurants, and residential units. One existing house, the John H. Sage house, a Queen Anne structure built in 1884, will remain as part of the new development.

Two other houses on the property would be demolished under the current plans. The Hart-Jarvis house, built 1829-30, is an elegant Federal/Greek Revival house in

the form of a classical temple with flanking wings. It was the childhood home of Elizabeth Hart Colt, wife of Samuel Colt and a prominent Hartford businesswoman and philanthropist. Next to it is the Erastus Brainerd, Jr., house (1852), a monumental Italianate villa with Indian ornament—a characteristically inventive design by the New Haven architect Henry Austin (see page 7). Both houses also have significant ties to Portland's brownstone quarries, which supplied building stone for projects from New York to Maine and beyond.

These houses rank among Portland's—and, indeed, Connecticut's—most distinguished buildings and they would give great distinction to any well-designed development that included them. Early plans called for moving and renovating the houses, but the developers dropped this idea and now say they will construct 'replicas,' employing salvaged architectural elements.

The Portland Historical Society, working with the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism's Historic Preservation and Museums Division, the Connecticut Trust's Circuit Rider, and local volunteers, has led an effort to convince Fonda and Hassan that reusing the houses is indeed feasible. Both buildings retain a high level of architectural integrity and appear to be structurally sound. Many similar buildings, and many buildings in worse condition, have been converted successfully to commercial, office, or multifamily residential use. The houses appear to be eligible for National Register listing, which would allow them to qualify for federal Historic Rehabilitation tax credits.

A hearing before the Portland Planning and Zoning Commission was scheduled for early June, but it has been postponed until July 9, at the developers' request. By then, preservationists and the developers will have had an opportunity to meet to discuss how to save the buildings. 🌸



G. Farmer

Right: Erastus Brainerd, Jr., house, Portland
Below: Hart-Jarvis house, Portland



Amin Munkerrick

New Haven. Yale University has completed renovations of two campus buildings, but other historic university buildings face demolition.

Stoeckel Hall is a Venetian Gothic fantasy, built in 1897 to designs by Grosvenor Atterbury and richly animated with ornate terra-cotta. After testing revealed extensive deterioration, the university engaged Charney Architects to renovate the interior and restore the exterior. The most visible aspect of the work is the restoration of the terra cotta. More than half of the 2,000-plus pieces were removed and catalogued, with 640 of them salvaged and cleaned, and 504 carefully reproduced. The remainder was cleaned in place and repointed. In addition, the original wood windows were restored and upgraded with insulating glass. Retention of 90 percent of the original structural walls and floors is expected to help the renovation qualify for a LEED Gold rating. A modern addition defers to the historic setting by stepping back from the street.

Ingalls Hockey Rink, designed by Eero Saarinen in 1956, is one of Yale's most prominent Modernist buildings. Said to evoke the grace and speed of ice skating, its swooping roof hangs on cables suspended from graceful concrete arch, creating a vast, column-free interior. The Rink has been the backdrop to sports dramas and real-life ones, perhaps most notably a series of tense public meetings during the Black Panther trial of spring 1970.

Yale is in the final phase of a multi-million dollar renovation and restoration of Ingalls Rink under Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates—the successors to Saarinen's firm. Highlights include restoration of the ice slab to its original elevation; refinishing of the original wooden benches; and refurbishment or replacement of the exterior doors. Outside the Rink, work is progressing on an underground addition that will house additional facilities. Completion is scheduled for September.

While these noteworthy restoration projects are wrapping up, Yale is proceeding with plans for a new building for the School of Management (SOM), designed by Foster and Partners, and two new residential colleges, by Robert A. M. Stern Architects. From reading the press materials one would think both were being built



in empty fields, but in fact their sites contain historic buildings that the university apparently has given no serious thought to reusing.

For the SOM building, Yale intends to raze two buildings constructed for the **Security Insurance Company**. One, designed in 1924 by Henry Killam Murphy, is an elegant Adamesque-style structure. As the first commercial intrusion into an upper-class residential neighborhood, it sought to fit through understated design and siting on a tree-dotted lawn. An awkward addition by Douglas Orr (1954) is also softened by its landscaping.

The new colleges' site includes a number of buildings. In 2004 the Trust named two of them as Most Important Threatened Historic Places as examples of demolition by neglect: a Greek Revival house at **88 Prospect Street** and the **Daniel Cady Eaton house**, home of a renowned professor.

Also on the site are three more 19th-century houses, plus **Hammond Hall** (1904), with a richly designed Beaux-Arts facade; **Brewster Hall** (1907), originally a dormitory for Yale's Sheffield Scientific School; **Urban Hall** (1957) a classroom

building by the Office of Douglas Orr; **Williams Hall** (1976), a residential building by Sherwood, Mills and Smith; **Donaldson Commons** (1978), one of Yale's most inviting modern public spaces: a dining hall designed by Herbert S. Newman Architects reusing a 19th-century carriage house that previously had been reused as a chapel; and **Mudd Library** (1984), by Roth and Moore.

None of these buildings, on either site, is a major landmark, but several of them possess historic connections or architectural quality and could lend themselves to reuse. For instance, the new colleges will require dormitory and dining facilities, both of which are already present. The Eaton house and 88 Prospect could become master's houses; and Hammond Hall, with its flexible, open space, could be used for almost anything—perhaps the new theater slated for the site of the Eaton house. The SOM building could reuse the Murphy building's elegant façade and charming entry rotunda, while the rest of the interiors could be reshaped with little concern about historic character.

continued on page 15

continued viability of Connecticut's struggling dairy farmers.

Bill 891 modifies the nationally-recognized CIA by increasing the land record filing fee from \$30 to \$40 and creating a new distribution formula for the revenue. As under the current surcharge, Town Clerks will keep \$1.00 of each \$30.00, and \$3.00 will go to the Local Capital Investment Program. Thirty-six dollars will go into the "Community Investment Fund", 60 percent of which will be split evenly among the DEP's Open Space Matching Grants program, the Commission on Culture and Tourism's Historic Preservation programs, and the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority's affordable housing projects. The remaining 40 percent will go towards agricultural viability programs and a new dairy relief program. After two years, the program will revert to its current fee level and revenue distribution.

This is a great victory for all the groups that benefit from this landmark funding source. Thank you to all of you who wrote letters or emails or made phone calls to save this fund. Please take a moment to write a note of thanks to your local legislators.

To keep abreast of the latest news on the state budget and its impact on historic preservation, please visit www.cttrust.org. If you are not receiving e-mail news/alerts from us, please send your e-mail address to contact@cttrust.org, and we will put you on our news distribution list.

—Helen Higgins

Stonington is a small town and our resources are limited. We never could have assembled all those specialists to work together as a team. As a municipality we should set an example of not damaging resources; the ERT provided us with information we needed to make an informed decision about this property. They really are unsung heroes."

There is no charge to towns for ERT studies. Instead, the program is funded (along with three other programs) through fees collected for land use permits at the local level and deposited in the DEP Conservation Fund. The funds provide for a full time coordinator, a part time assistant, office space, equipment,

and the costs of field review and report preparation.

Like many state programs that have dedicated sources of revenue, the future of ERT funding is currently in question. Governor Rell has proposed diverting the land use fees to the general budget, and replacing ERT funding as a line item under DEP, where it is much more vulnerable to cuts. Supporters of ERT have urged the General Assembly to preserve the program's dedicated revenue source. 🌿

For more information...

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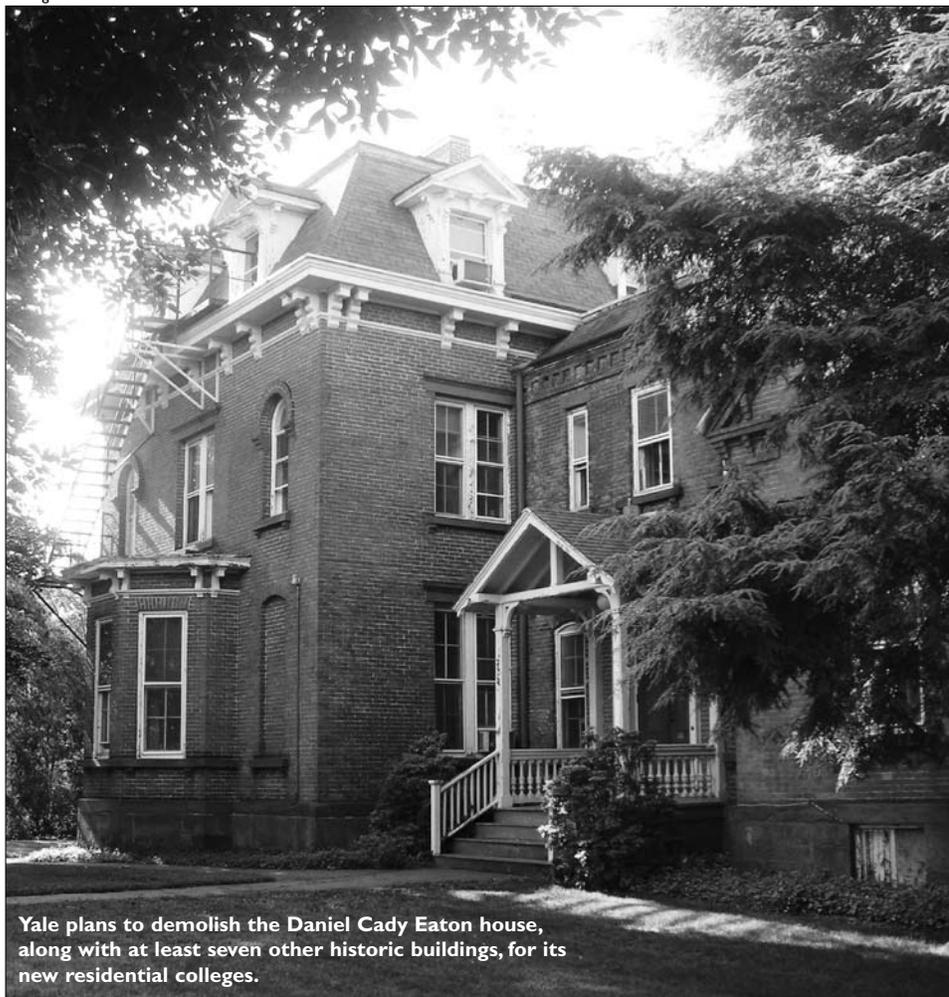
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Fortunately both Foster and Stern are experienced in working with historic buildings and could skillfully weave together existing buildings and new construction—if Yale wanted. Recycling existing buildings would also enhance the university's

emphasis on sustainability. The university filed for demolition permits for the college site on June 4. The city delay of demolition period, covering six buildings, will expire in 90 days, and demolition will doubtless begin immediately afterward. ❀

C. Wigren



Yale plans to demolish the Daniel Cady Eaton house, along with at least seven other historic buildings, for its new residential colleges.

iron brace made by a blacksmith might be more appropriate. Cost: \$10 to \$30 plus installation. ❀

Contact Leeke directly for answers to your questions and more information on techniques for restoring and maintaining your historic building. Write to John Leeke, Preservation Consultant at 26 Higgins St., Portland ME 04103, (207) 773-2306; or by email to johnleeke@aol.com or visit his Internet Web Site, www.HistoricHomeWorks.com.



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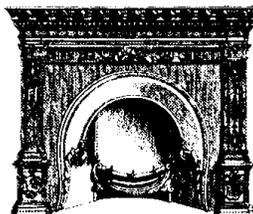
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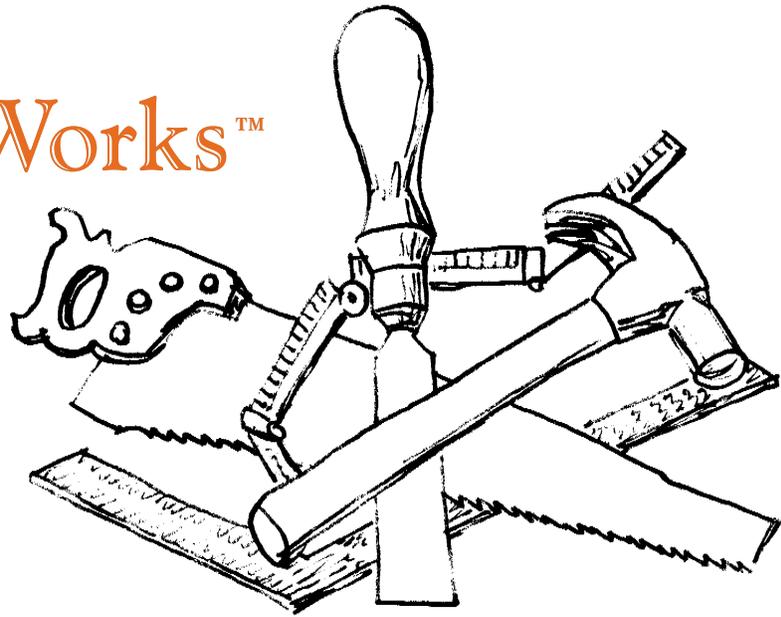
Ten years ago my husband and I moved into a cottage-style, three-bedroom home that we understand was a Sears kit home. We have been slowly remodeling the house. The problem we are having that we would like advice on is the forced-air register vents. They are 14" x 14" square but the bottom sticks out from the wall three inches and the top one inch. They are not easy to find. Any ideas where we can get help? We also don't want to spend a fortune on them since we have to get seven of them.

I do not think your registers would have enough value for you to find them at an architectural salvage company. If it was a commonly used system in your area there might be other houses with the same registers. You might check with remodeling contractors or heating system installation contractors to see if they are about to remove similar registers from an upcoming project. Cost: nothing to \$5 each.

These days I usually start right off by taking a sample to a sheetmetal fabrication shop and having reproductions made. Forced air heating contractors sometimes have a good sheetmetal shop, but you may end up at welding shop for the needed skills. This approach saves time and keeps the project schedule on track. Cost: \$50 to \$300 each, depending on complexity.

I am looking for round floor registers which are placed in the floor where they can be opened or closed to allow heat in or cut it off. Apparently they are no longer manufactured. If you can help, I truly appreciate it. Thanks.

Reggio Registers (Ayer, Mass., (978) 772-3493) lists a 9" diameter cast iron grill (product #1080) for an 8" round duct. A pinwheel-styled grill rotates to control the air flow. Throughout the 19th century this type of register was installed to let warm air rise from a room with a heating stove up into an unheated room. Current standards of fire safety usually do not allow floor registers to be used to connect two living spaces because fire could easily spread up through the structure. These registers could be used at the end of a heating duct.



Banister Braces

Do you know where I can get a 'banister brace'? We have an old stairway banister that needs to be tightened up and we were told that old Victorian homes used to have some sort of brace for just this purpose.

Many stairway banisters (or handrails) become loose over time and can fail just when you need them with tragic results. Keeping your banister in good solid condition should have a high priority. In older houses the banister rises up the stairway at an angle and passes within a few or several inches of the second floor structure. This is a good place to brace the banister to the solid floor structure. A metal brace needs to be custom made because the distance from the banister to the floor structure will be different for every house. A practical brace can be formed out of 1/8" x 3/4" steel strapping from the local hardware store by bending a 1" right-angle tab on each end with a hammer and vice, then drilling a 3/16" hole in each tab. Install the brace with woodscrews so it does not interfere with your grip of the banister as your hand slides along. Cost: \$3.00 and one hour of do-it-yourself time. If you house is earlier than 1850 a wrought

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