

Historic Barns of Connecticut, Barbara Metsac

As wool became a valuable raw material for Connecticut textile mills in the 19th century, sheep graduated from open pastures to fenced paddocks—like this Ashford example—to special sheep folds or barns.

Connecticut's Agricultural Heritage

Excerpts from the Connecticut Trust's historic context report
by Janice P. Cunningham, Historic Preservation Services

Editor's note: This report provides background information on Connecticut's agricultural history, which can be used to support the preservation of historic barns, particularly nominations to the State Register of Historic Places.

Connecticut's historic barns are highly significant resources, a collective illustration of the evolutionary transition from a colonial agrarian society to the modern urbanized industrial state. As an architectural embodiment of Connecticut's agricultural history, barns reflect the changes in type and use of agricultural buildings over time in response to improvements in agricultural practices and technology and the demands of the marketplace.

As Connecticut agriculture moved from the exploitation of the land to an acceptance of the necessity to protect and conserve this vital resource, traditional and often wasteful farming practices gave way to more specialized and scientific methods. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, although farming was no longer the "great business of the nation" envisioned by

the founders, agriculture was more efficient and productive, as reflected in the dairy and poultry industries, which by the early 1900s generated the most technologically advanced changes in barn construction.

We have celebrated Connecticut farmers in all of their various historical roles, a saga that began with the English immigrant settlers whose Old World land policies, building traditions, and agricultural practices became imbedded in Connecticut's colonial culture. The entrepreneurial Yankee farmers, who emerged in the post-Revolutionary market economy, often experimented with new crops or specialized in exportable commodities for the maritime trade. Several established new markets for Connecticut farm products in the Deep South. Members of succeeding

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From the Executive Director

Terry Tondro, who died April 26, 2012, was a former trustee of the Connecticut Trust—a small symbol of the importance that historic preservation, its practice, and its laws had in his professional and personal life. Until recently, when named emeritus Professor of Law, Terry was the Thomas F. Gallivan Professor of Real Property at the University of Connecticut Law School, and, for his students, their favorite teacher. He engaged and inspired and helped launch careers in land use and preservation law for a number of students. He had no equal as an expert in the best practices of historic preservation and was an always accessible advisor on thorny preservation and land use issues. On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the staff at the Trust, we send his widow, Helle, our deep sympathy.

I think Terry would have been proud of our newly launched data source for local historic districts throughout Connecticut. Funded by a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office, DECD, the Trust has created a comprehensive, searchable, web-based inventory of local historic districts and properties. The inventory is intended to serve as a guide and does not have any official regulatory status. It lists more than 8,000 properties in 134 local historic districts, plus 93 local historic properties. Information for most districts has been retrieved from study committee reports or district ordinances filed with the SHPO. For others, information has been collated

from town offices, district commissions, or GIS maps available online. Please visit: www.historicdistrictsct.org.

The Trust has received a grant from the Office of Tourism, DECD, to create the Connecticut Barn Trail, a statewide initiative that will draw in-state and out-of-state visitors to agri-tourism sites with historic barns. A brochure and an iPhone application will identify historic and architecturally significant barns visible from scenic roads leading from one agri-tourism site to the next. Bikers, walkers, and road trippers will have fun learning about our historic barns, over 8,000 of which have been identified on www.connecticutbarns.org.

Joining the Facebook fray has been a challenge for the Trust—especially keeping up to date when our busy staff has so many other responsibilities. Starting in May, staff members will take turns making sure that there is at least one new posting every week. We can add other news items as they arise, but at least we will be current, and we hope

this will raise interest in historic preservation even beyond our membership. Please visit www.Facebook.com/connecticuttrust and keep in touch by “liking” our page.

—Helen Higgins

Upcoming Meetings of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Council

August 1, 2012, at 9:30 a.m.
September 5, 2012, at 9:30 a.m.

All meetings take place at the
State Historic Preservation Office
Department of Economic and Community
Development Main Conference Room

1 Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor
Hartford, Connecticut

For more information call
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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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New Members of the Board of Trustees

This spring, the Connecticut Trust welcomed seven new members of its Board of Trustees. They bring a breadth of experience and enthusiasm to the Trust's work.

As the First Selectman of Harwinton, **Frank Chiamonte** was instrumental in the effort to move the Harwinton House back to town from New Canaan. Before that, he was executive director of the Hartford Botanical Garden project, interim Director of Business and Workforce Development for the Connecticut Community College system, and executive director of the Capital Region Workforce Development Board. He also has served as Dean of Continuing Education and Community Services and Chairman of the Business Department at Capital Community College. Mr. Chiamonte also serves Business for Downtown Hartford, the Central Connecticut Tourism Board, the Hartford Guides, and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

Mary Ann Handley, of Manchester, was elected to the Board in March, filling the unexpired term of Laura Dillman. Ms. Handley taught History at Manchester Community College from 1967 to 1997. She has extensive political experience, as a member of the Manchester Democratic Town Committee, the Manchester Board of Directors, and as a State Senator from 1997 to 2011. She served on the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Board, which reviews nominations to the National Register, and has been involved with the Manchester Historical Society, Voices for Children, Connecticut Network against the Death Penalty, the Governor's Task Force on the Achievement Gap, and the General Assembly's Task Force on Higher Education.

Elizabeth Torres, of New Haven, is Executive Director of the Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, where she expanded the organization's reach to include affordable housing development, property management, healthy homes and lead remediation, and homeownership counseling. She previously was a project manager for The Community Builders. Her community involvement includes the Bridgeport Child

Advocacy Coalition, the Continuum of Care Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness in Bridgeport, the Housing Committee of the Southend Neighborhood Revitalization Zone, Casa Otoñal, and the New Haven Board of Education, where she chairs the Administration and Finance Committee and is secretary of the City Wide Building Committee.

Marye Wagner, of Clinton, has been a staff writer and advisor for U. S. Senator J. Bennett Johnston, a lobbyist for the American Petroleum Refiners Association, a political consultant, a fundraiser and outreach coordinator for Senator Chris Dodd's re-election committee, and a financial advisor at Dean Witter Reynolds. She also has served on the Connecticut River Estuary Regional Planning Agency, the Clinton Planning and Zoning Commission, the Clinton Ad Hoc Committee on Open Space and Conservation, and the Board of Managers of the Connecticut Chapter of the Colonial Dames. As a volunteer, Ms. Wagner has written grant applications for the Town of Clinton and the Episcopal Church of the Holy Advent.

Damaris Whittaker, of Marlborough, is Director of Marketing and Development for the Christian Activities Council of Hartford; she also teaches grant writing and fundraising at Capital Community College. She was the founder and program director for New Hope in Community, a nonprofit organization focusing on health and education initiatives through the Latino Faith Partnership for Prevention and Treatment Program, and a paralegal. Ms. Whittaker also serves as co-chair of the Universal Healthcare Foundation, Interfaith Fellowship and a member of the Sustinet Leadership Network, New Hope in Community, and the Greater Hartford Interfaith Coalition of Equity and Justice.

Regina Winters is the principal of Zared Enterprises, a New Haven-based architectural firm committed to revitalizing neighborhoods, resuscitating urban commercial corridors, and creating development that is sensitive to the natural environment, historic character, and community cultures. Ms. Winters also served as interim director of the Housing Authority of the City of New Haven and

director of real estate development for the Mutual Housing Association of South Central Connecticut. She sits on the New Haven Board of Zoning Appeals, the boards of the Hannah Gray Home and the Connecticut Fund for the Environment, and the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Board.

Patrick Zailckas is a partner in Zailckas & Zailckas Attorneys, in Waterbury, where he is responsible for overall supervision and firm management. Prior to this, he practiced as an attorney in the petroleum and natural gas industries. Mr. Zailckas is active in the Connecticut Bar Association, the Waterbury Bar Association and the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association, as well as the Waterbury Symphony Orchestra, Chase Collegiate School, and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, the Waterbury Brownfield Site Selection Committee, Waterbury Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Steering Committee for the Strategic Plan of Conservation and Development, and Waterbury Zoning Commission.

In addition to these new Board members, Robert Svensk, of Southport, was elected to a second term, and Edmund Schmidt, of Darien, was named a gubernatorial appointee. Also, the current officers were reelected for another year: Edmund Schmidt, Darien, chairman; Charles Janson, Darien, vice-chairman; Edith Pestana, Hartford, secretary; Edward W. Munster, Haddam, treasurer; and Walter Fiederowicz, Litchfield, assistant treasurer. ❀



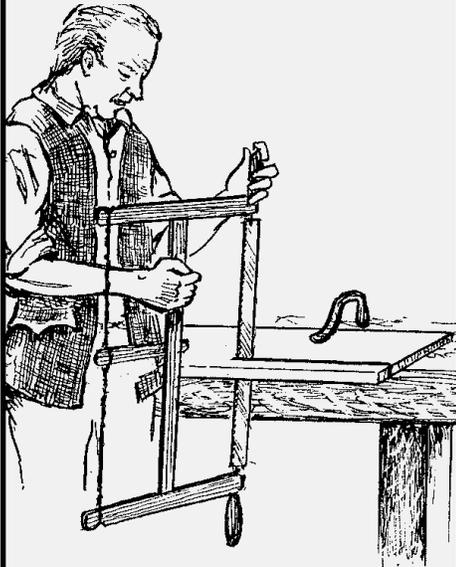
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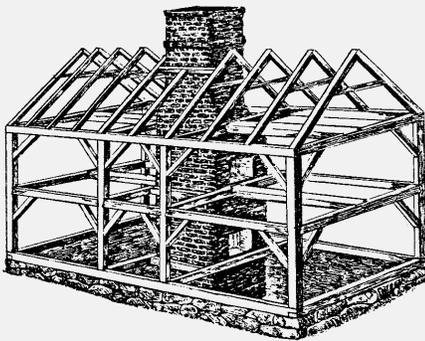
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The migrants who left Connecticut for the West built so many traditional English barns, like this one in Old Saybrook, that they were simply identified as "Connecticut barns."

Agricultural Heritage, cont'd from page 1

generations who left their family farms for new lives on the frontier often carried on the building traditions of their ancestors.

Although few in number, new European immigrants found refuge on abandoned Yankee farms and passed them down to their descendants, a cultural transformation and revival of the rural countryside that is considered to be one of the great stories of modern Connecticut. Together with the new breed of college-educated, professional farmers, they helped reverse the agricultural decline of the 1900s and made farming in Connecticut more productive than ever before.

In today's post-modern electronic world, the "return to the land" movement was a significant factor in the renewal of the state's agricultural economy. Fostered in part by a greater interest in nutrition and health, this popular movement has encouraged the expansion of community based agriculture, and the proliferation of farm stands and farmers' markets selling locally grown and organic produce. The movement has brought together public and private organizations and agencies to promote new land policies and programs that help preserve farmland and agricultural buildings, making farming in Connecticut more affordable and productive. It is hoped

that Connecticut's farm landscapes, often only glimpsed by passing motorists on the interstates, will foster a renewed awareness and appreciation for Connecticut's historic farmsteads and the beauty and diversity of its cultivated landscapes.

The context report makes it clear that farming is, above all, a business, and barns are business buildings. The report follows the changing agricultural methods and markets that shaped barn construction throughout Connecticut's history. Here are some more excerpts:

THE CONNECTICUT COLONY, 1635-1780

Colonial Commerce and Trade

Starting about 1660, colony river ports became a great funnel that gathered up the agricultural surplus of the whole Connecticut River Valley. By the mid-1700s, a variety of products were shipped from New London, New Haven, and Fairfield, Connecticut's major coastal trading ports. Grains of all types, especially corn and wheat, tobacco, lumber, horses, and cattle were sent to the West Indies and exchanged for molasses, rum, sugar, and fruit. The strong Indian tobacco originally cultivated in the Central Valley, mainly for



This barn in Cornwall was part of the Cream Hill Agricultural School, which educated 272 aspiring farmers between 1845 and 1869.

domestic use, gave way to a finer, milder leaf which became a major export commodity. Middletown became the colonial center for the horse trade in this period; horses were shipped to the Caribbean on the open decks of special boats known as “horse jockeys.” Connecticut flaxseed was much in demand in Europe and usually transshipped from New York. However, overseas commerce virtually ended after the American Revolution began in 1775 and did not recover until the 1790s.

THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY, 1780-1850

Agricultural Reform

A broadly based organizational and institutional agricultural reform movement, which introduced educational programs for aspiring young farmers and the general public, was well underway by 1800. Organizations and publications dedicated to disseminating new ideas to the average farmer began in New Haven with the county agricultural society, founded there in 1803. The Hartford County Agricultural Society was formed the following year, and a state society was in place by 1852.

The need for a formal agricultural education was recognized in the 1820s. The Cream Hill Agricultural School was founded in 1845 by Dr. Samuel Gold and

Theodore S. Gold (father and son) on the family’s farm in West Cornwall. With a curriculum that combined classical and scientific education with intensive practicums in all aspects of farming, it provided a well-rounded education to 272 aspiring young farmers. After the school closed in 1869, Theodore S. Gold served for many years on the State Board of Agriculture and was instrumental in the founding of Connecticut Agricultural School at Storrs.

Agricultural Practices

Mixed farming gradually gave way to large-scale monoculture during the first half of the nineteenth century. Although Connecticut’s sons and daughters were still leaving home at an unprecedented rate, many family farms survived and prospered.

Much-needed improvements in agricultural methods were introduced in this period. Soils were improved with natural fertilizers, such as gypsum, seaweed, bone meal, plaster of Paris (lime), and stable manure. Seaweed was often combined with pig manure to improve the light, sandy soils of the coastal slope. Whitefish, a type of herring, was seined in huge numbers to spread on fields before plowing.

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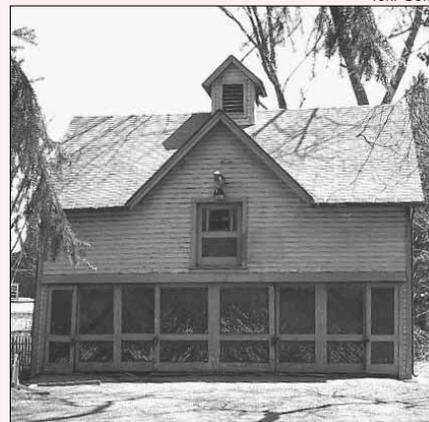
Hartford Passes Barn Ordinance

Owners of historic barns and carriage houses in Hartford will now be able to create accessory dwelling units in them, thanks to a new ordinance passed by the Hartford City Council in March. The ordinance encourages the preservation of these outbuildings by allowing economically viable uses for them.

To qualify, a barn or carriage house must be associated with an owner-occupied single-family house, have been built before 1940, and contribute to the architectural or historic character of the city. The ordinance excludes the R-8 zone, the area of the West End that is north of Asylum Avenue. This is the most expensive area of the city, and a few vocal residents opposed the provision, although the West End Civic Association supported it.

For Toni Gold, an urban planner who lives in Hartford, the ordinance represents the culmination of a five-year effort. She notes the irony of excluding the R-8 zone: “That zone has not only the largest number of carriage barns in Hartford, but also the largest number that already have residential units in them—due either to the grandfathering of servants’ quarters or to the owners’ influence with City Hall. This is clear evidence, it seems to me, that using barns preserves them.”

Toni Gold



An ordinance recently passed in Hartford makes it possible to create accessory dwelling units in historic carriage houses like this one.

New types of farm machinery that relied on horsepower, such as the mechanical seed drill for planting and the hay rake, were not adopted on most Connecticut farms until after the Civil War, but farmers began to find important uses for horses much sooner, including horse treadmills for threshing grain. Outdoor animal treadmills were not new; in fact, they were a fixture on many colonial farms. In this period, however, the treadmill was set up inside the barn right on the threshing floor.

Farm Products

Fairfield, Enfield, and Milford were the leading early nineteenth-century producers of flax, a very profitable, multi-purpose cash crop, much in demand for its seed and oil. Much of the seed was shipped to England and Ireland and used to replenish old flax fields with vigorous American varieties. Although some raw flax was sold to textile mills, much of the crop was carted off to the many oil mills in the state making linseed oil, a basic ingredient for exterior paint coatings. Frugal Yankee farmers often used the oil cake residue to fatten cattle or hogs for market, and some even painted their weathered old barns and houses for the first time.

Onions were the principal export crop in Westport, Greenfield Hill in Fairfield, and Wethersfield. Some farmers sold onions and other root vegetables to ships' chandlers who provisioned the whaling

and sealing vessels and commercial fishing fleets that sailed from New London, Stonington, and Mystic.

Connecticut's apple orchards were well established by the mid 1700s and by the early 1800s, at least 20 varieties were growing in the Central Valley's "apple belt," which ran from Farmington south to New Haven. In Woodbury, the value of its orchards was derived primarily from the profitable production and sale of cider and apple jack (brandy). When the temperance movement gained ground, however, sales of brandy declined and apple production slumped, not to be revived until much later in the century.

Home industries in this period, often farm-related, provided additional income to farmers and their wives. Broom corn was a specialty crop raised primarily for broom making in Wethersfield and Wallingford. After about 1810, women began making hand-rolled cigars, a major winter occupation in many Central Valley homes. Women also excelled in the delicate task of unwinding raw silk cocoons and spinning silk thread in the early years of Connecticut's silk industry.

By the 1840s some traditional crops were no longer economically viable because of Western competition. With access to cheaper land and transportation, the farmers in the Mid-West, America's new grain belt, could sell their crops in eastern markets at much lower cost. Some Connecticut acreage was turned over to grazing, but

hay, a major commodity in a horse-drawn society, was harvested for sale to urban stables and raised on dairy farms for fodder. Rye, a popular grain crop much in demand in the distilling business, had a resurgence after disease-resistant strains were developed; in Hartford County alone, most of the 500 distilleries were making gin from rye mash.

Stock Farming

For a relatively brief time, cattle farmers also prospered in conjunction with the distillery business. Herds of beef cattle were routinely fattened on "still swill," the grain residue from the distilleries. However, there was a noticeable drop in cattle production after federal revenue taxes were imposed on alcohol shortly after the Civil War. Although the taxes were certainly a factor, the Eastern cattle business was already doomed. In this state, it was largely replaced by dairying and poultry farming.

Sheep farming became a major specialty after 1810, when David Humphreys introduced Spanish Merino sheep, a breed highly prized for its long fleece. By 1813 wool was touted as the "cotton of the North," but when tariff protection for imported woolen textiles ended in 1846 raw wool prices fell sharply. Whole flocks were sold off to the butcher. Sheep farming revived during the Civil War as demand developed for wool to replace cotton and meet military needs. Large-scale sheep farming was generally phased out in Connecticut by 1900.



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CONSOLIDATION AND DECLINE 1850-1930

By the late nineteenth century, farming in Connecticut became increasingly specialized and more commercial. With less land in production, agriculture became more intensive and productive, a process accompanied by improvements in the design of agricultural outbuildings.

A number of historians have written about the decline of Connecticut agriculture in this period. However, Michael Bell, Connecticut's historical geographer, determined that farming did in fact decline, but not until after 1920, and more importantly, productivity remained high in New England well into the twentieth century, especially in Connecticut.

Although less land was in production statewide, the market value of farm products per acre remained high in the three southern New England states. In 1889 the *continued on page 12*



In Avon, the prosperous Sanford family built an unusually large New England bank barn in the late 19th century, embellished with a bracketed cupola and ornamental door and window surrounds.

Barns across the Nation: How Connecticut's Barns Preservation Program Compares

By Kristen Young

Nearly every state in the country has taken action to preserve historic barns, through surveys, tours, grants, or broader programs. I recently undertook a survey to determine what other barn programs existed, who was running them, and what these programs consisted of. The results have helped the Connecticut Trust see how its Historic Barns of Connecticut program compares. Since 2004, the Trust has been surveying historic barns across the state. The Trust also offers barns grants and educational outreach and workshops and is creating a statewide barn trail. Our program is currently run by a few paid staff, and many volunteers have helped conduct our survey.

I found a range of projects and approaches across the country. Some programs are run entirely by volunteers, some by nonprofits or State Historic Preservation Offices or by partnerships among groups. Some focus on surveys, others on preservation assistance and advocacy, and still others on public information. Although there are only fifteen established barn programs in the country, twenty-one states have completed countywide or

statewide barn surveys. These vary in depth from a small group of volunteers documenting historic barns in a single county to full-scale statewide projects. In some cases, multiple organizations are working to survey barns in a single state.

Connecticut currently has the most comprehensive survey in the country, with more than 8,000 barns documented throughout the state, thanks to a corps of volunteers. The project is still ongoing, and the Trust hopes to document every historic barn in the state. Survey information on all the documented barns is available online at www.connecticutbarns.org, one of the most accessible and complete bodies of information about historic barns in the country. In addition, staff members have completed inventory forms on 2,300 of the barns and are currently working on State Register nominations for 200 of the most significant. A consultant has recently completed a thematic context statement that can be used in additional nominations (see page 1).

It is clear that barns are attracting increasing awareness from preservationists throughout the country. In addition to the fifteen cur-

rent programs, seven states either are starting a barn program or want to. Also, many organizations mentioned the need to document related resources, such as ranches or other historic agricultural landscapes.

Networking with these other organizations would be beneficial to the Trust and other parties. For instance, in creating our barn trail, we are receiving guidance from the 21 states that already have trails. Similarly, we can share our survey and database experience with other organizations. We also can keep an eye on the development of tax incentives in other states for the owners of historic barns, as such incentives could be valuable here.

This research has fostered new discussions among preservation organizations across the country. No doubt, it will continue to be valuable in the future, as we and other preservationists continue to promote awareness about these landmarks of our agricultural lands.

Kristen Young is Project Assistant for Historic Barns of Connecticut.

Changing Lives, Changing Places

History is the story of change. People move and adjust to new homes, technological innovations offer new ways of making a living or render old ones obsolete, architectural fashions come and go. Four sites recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places point to periods of change in Connecticut communities.

The **Marlborough Street historic district**, in Portland, is a residential neighborhood from the first half of the 19th century, when prosperous residents, many connected to the town's brownstone quarries, built new homes with views of the Connecticut River. The district's oldest house was built in 1829 for the Reverend William Jarvis, rector of Trinity Episcopal Church. The house, an early example of the Greek Revival style, has a graceful Ionic portico. In 1854, Gilbert Stancliff, a quarry superintendent, and Joseph Williams, a merchant, built matching octagonal houses, an unusual form that enjoyed a brief burst of popularity.

The most imposing dwelling belonged to quarry owner Erastus Brainerd, Jr. Built in 1852, it was designed by the New Haven architect Henry Austin, who drew inspiration from Italian farmhouses and Indian temples to showcase the wealth that the quarries created.

While Portland's quarries boomed, other industries struggled. In New Haven, the **M. Armstrong and Company carriage factory** represents one response to changing markets.

Portland Historical Society



Erastus Brainerd's Romantic-style villa brought urban architectural sophistication to the area that now is Portland's Marlborough Street National Register district.

Many of the city's carriage makers, which in 1858 had been ranked fourth in the nation, failed during the Civil War or the economic instability that followed. An exception was the company founded in 1859 by Montgomery Armstrong, which survived by concentrating on high-end products, leaving the less expensive segments of the market to others. In the 20th century, the company switched to producing equally high-end automobile bodies,

Concentration on high-end products and adaptation to changing markets allowed New Haven's M. Armstrong carriage company to survive for three generations.

Lucas Karmazinas



until competition from the Midwest forced it to close in 1927. The Armstrong factory, built in 1882 as the company was solidifying its position in the post-bellum market, is one of only two carriage factories still extant in New Haven.

In Connecticut's cities, industrial and commercial growth created new housing patterns, as illustrated by the **Vine Street apartment buildings**, in Hartford. As the city expanded, developers bought parcels of land and subdivided them for sale to individuals who erected one or two buildings at a time. A new building type also emerged: a symmetrical three-story building with two units per floor, known locally as the "Perfect Six."

Vine Street was developed by the firm of Meyers & Gross, who bought fifteen acres north of Albany Avenue in 1922. They laid out Vine Street for "high-class apartment houses." Between 1922 and 1925, developers put up ten Perfect Sixes plus one larger apartment building. The buildings' uniform scale, setbacks, and spacing create a consistent streetscape. Within this framework, different styles—Classical Revival, Tudor Revival, and Spanish Mission Revival—give each building its own identity.

Change came to the countryside as well. With people moving to the cities, farmland lost value. The depressed prices attracted new immigrants, among them the founders of the **New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society synagogue and creamery site**, in Montville.

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Gregory Farmer



Hartford's Vine Street apartments are examples of new building types that emerged as Connecticut cities grew in the early 20th century.

Beginning about 1890, Orthodox Jewish immigrants from Russia began settling in the town's Chesterfield section, where they created a close-knit enclave. The settlers received financial support from the Baron de Hirsch Fund, which helped Jewish immigrants escape city slums and become farmers.

Organizing themselves as the New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society (NEHFES), the settlers built a synagogue, a simple structure consecrated in 1892. By 1910 they had added a *mikvah*, or ritual bathhouse. The farmers also

formed a cooperative creamery association in 1892 to process milk into cream, butter, and cheese for market. Like other cooperative creameries throughout the state, the enterprise operated only intermittently; it closed for good in 1915.

Eventually, the immigrants' descendants moved on. The synagogue closed in 1953 and it, along with the *mikvah*, creamery, and associated buildings, were demolished or burned. Today, the only visible remnants of the community buildings are some foundations and a marker erected by the NEHFES, which has been reconstituted to preserve the site. 🌸

courtesy of the New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society



The New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society, an immigrant group, built this synagogue in Montville, in 1892. The synagogue burned in 1980.



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Trust Invests for Vibrant Communities

The Connecticut Trust's Vibrant Communities Initiative (VCI), generously funded by the State Historic Preservation Office, Commission on Economic and Community Development, with funds from the Community Investment Act, helps Connecticut municipalities to plan and act on preserving historic resources, to encourage adaptive use of historic resources, to enhance and protect cultural landscapes, to promote preservation for downtown revitalization, and to revitalize historic villages, neighborhoods, or downtowns. In May, the Trust awarded grants of \$50,000 each to five towns or cities. In addition to the funding, Connecticut Circuit Rider Brad Schide will continue to work with each recipient to carry out the grant projects.



Town of Bolton

Bolton: preserving a rural community

Listed on the National Register, Bolton's town center is a rural community with buildings from the 18th to the 20th centuries. The Town owns more than 130 acres of land in the center, including two town greens, the town hall, library, Resident State Trooper's office (in an historic house), and the Bolton Heritage Farm, the site of an encampment on the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route. This Route also passes through several nearby towns, and Bolton is looking for ways to work with the other towns to make the Route more of a destination. In addition, the consultants eventually hired under the VCI grant will help other property owners around the green with their rehabilitation plans, work with active businesses on their needs, and finalize an overall growth plan for the area.



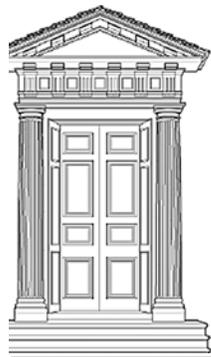
Bridgeport: downtown revitalization

The City of Bridgeport is seeking to create a preservation and development plan for historic resources located around McLevy Green, the commercial and civic hub of the downtown and part of the Downtown South National Register district. The area already is seeing some redevelopment activity, and the City wants to reinforce those efforts by putting together financial resources and development strategies to ensure the best possible reuse of two City-owned buildings as well as other properties nearby. The city-owned buildings are the City Savings Bank building (1912) and McLevy Hall, the former city hall (1853, 1905). As part of VCI, the City will craft a request for proposals for redeveloping McLevy Hall that will encourage revitalizing the rest of the area as well. In addition, the consultants will help other property owners around the green with rehabilitation plans, work with businesses on their needs, and finalize an overall growth plan for the area.

continued on page 14



G. Farmer



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Grants Fund Preservation Planning

In June, the Connecticut Trust awarded Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants to fourteen municipalities and non-profit organizations, totaling \$138,345. The grants will make possible a minimum initial investment of \$276,690 in these historic sites.

The grants, intended to encourage and support community efforts in planning for the preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of historic buildings and places, are part of the Trust's technical assistance program, in collaboration with and with generous funding from the Connecticut General Assembly, the Connecticut Humanities Council, and the State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development, through the Community Investment Act. The recipients are:

New Fairfield, Preserve New Fairfield, Inc.: \$1,500 for emergency conditions assessment of the roofs at the Hubbell house and Parsonage (1840)

New Haven, Congregation Beth Israel: \$20,000 for plans and specifications for restoration of the Orchard Street Shul (1920; NR)

Plainfield, First Congregational Church of Plainfield: \$7,932.50 for exterior conditions assessment and treatment plan for the church building (1816, NR)

Southbury Historic District Commission



South Britain library (1904)

Plainville, Congregational Church of Plainville: \$15,275 for plans and specifications for restoring the church building (1850, NR pending)

Portland Historical Society: \$8,825 for a conditions assessment and National Register nomination for the White-Overton-Callander house (c.1714)

Southbury Historic District Commission: \$9,922.50 to assess the condition of roofs of Old Town Hall (1873) and South Britain Library (1904), and maintenance assessment of them plus the Bullet Hill School (1762), all NR.

Southington Community Cultural Arts, Inc.: \$20,000 for capital needs assessment and design development for reusing the Gura building (1925, NR) as a cultural arts center

Stamford, Unitarian Universalist Society: \$4,800 for conditions assessment of the church (1870, NR)

Stonington, Stanton-Davis Museum, Inc.: \$6,465 for a business plan to complete restoration of the Stanton-Davis homestead (1670 and later, NR)

Thomaston, Railroad Museum of New England: \$5,000 for conditions assessment and long-term restoration plan for the Thomaston railroad station (1881, SR in process)

Torrington Historical Society: \$2,500 for a feasibility study to relocate and restore Skee's Diner (1920, NR)

City of Torrington: \$13,500 for a conditions assessment, site survey, and archaeological study of the Jacob Strong house (1750, SR)

West Hartford, Town of West Hartford and Noah Webster House, Inc.: \$15,125 for phase two of a capital needs assessment and code review for the Sarah Whitman Hooker homestead (c.1720-1810, NR)

Windsor, Ellsworth Memorial Association with Connecticut Daughters of the American Revolution: \$7,500, for an historic structure report of the Oliver Ellsworth homestead (1781, 1788, NHL).

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Agricultural Heritage, cont'd from page 7

value of produce per acre in New England of \$5.39 exceeded the national average of \$3.95. Connecticut, at \$7.96, twice the national average, ranked second in the region, a productivity level maintained until the 1980s.

Rural Demographics

Dramatic demographic changes accompanied the contraction of Connecticut's agricultural economy. Between 1850 and 1910, as the state population increased from 370,000 to nearly 1.2 million, the total rural population dropped dramatically to 115,000. By 1930 only three percent of Connecticut's population lived in rural areas. As a result, many farms were sold or abandoned when old family lines died out and left no heirs. Although a considerable number were reclaimed by European immigrants, abandoned farmland often returned to scrub or forest. In addition, thousands of acres were acquired by the state and power companies for watersheds and forest preservation programs, or impounded for municipal reservoirs.

Legislative Action and Grassroots Organizations

Important agricultural developments in this period were the establishment of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in 1875, the first in the country, the founding of the Connecticut Agriculture Board the following year, and the establishment of the Federal Farm Credit Bureau in 1917.

The importance of the experiment station cannot be overstated. Because of its



Peter Jensen, a Danish immigrant, bought the Sanford farm, in Avon, in 1936. Jensen enclosed the lower level of the late-19th-century barn for his dairy business.

ground-breaking research in the science of agriculture, Connecticut's agrarian tradition was sustained throughout the industrial period, allowing a small rural population to meet its own needs and also supply the region's burgeoning urban population. The station directly benefited farmers in the tobacco, dairying, and poultry industries, Connecticut's most sustainable agricultural sectors, and also assisted in the development of pomiculture and floriculture.

Immigrant Farmers

Large-scale European immigration, which reached its peak before World War I, had a substantial positive impact upon the farm economy. While the vast majority of newcomers settled in cities, by 1920 immigrants owned or leased at least one-third of Connecticut's 22,635 farms. Essentially

reprising the history of the first settlers, they took over abandoned or failing farms all over Connecticut. Faced with the task of reclaiming old pastures and fields or unimproved land while learning how to farm, many immigrant families struggled to make a living as subsistence farmers. Some continued to be general farmers, with small surpluses for sale; others moved on into the income-producing sectors, specializing in eggs, poultry, dairying, or market gardening, and a few became tobacco farmers. 🌸

"Connecticut's Agricultural Heritage" was made possible by a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office, Department of Economic and Community Development.

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The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station bought Lockwood Farm, in Hamden, in 1910 as an outdoor laboratory.

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Danbury: a castle in a park

Hearthstone Castle is located in Danbury's Tarrywile Park. The National Register-listed castle, built atop Town Mountain between 1895 and 1899, has panoramic views, but it has been vacant for decades as the City has struggled to find a sustainable use for it, and funds for rehabilitation. The VCI grant will allow the City to draw up a comprehensive needs assessment for the

building, following community sessions to seek input from the general public and interested groups on its potential use, either as a monument or other usable public structure in the park. Cost estimates to convert the structure will also be a component of the planning after a use is determined.



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City of New Britain



New Britain: stopping blight

Building on a city-wide historic preservation plan completed in 2009 with a Community Cultural Planning grant from the Trust (the precursor to VCI), the City of New Britain seeks to create a preservation plan for properties in the Walnut Hill National Register district that have fallen into disrepair and threaten to become blighting influences on neighboring properties. Working with professional consultants, the City will select key buildings for feasibility analysis and reuse or rehabilitation plans.



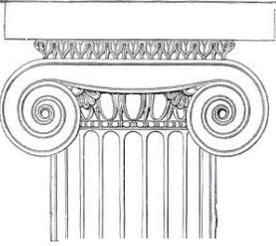
Town of Wethersfield



Wethersfield: commercial redevelopment

This grant focuses on three privately owned properties at the heart of Old Wethersfield, the town's historic center. Two of the buildings, the former Masonic hall (1921) and the Simeon Belden house (1767), are vacant; the third, the Comstock-Ferre Seed Company (1833 and following), is partly vacant after a controversial redevelopment plan was abandoned (see CPN September/October 2007). Because of their high visibility and importance to Wethersfield's commercial district, a master plan for Old Wethersfield completed in 2008 called for the town to identify appropriate uses for the properties and strategies for achieving them, including needed streetscape and traffic improvements. The VCI process will help to accomplish that.





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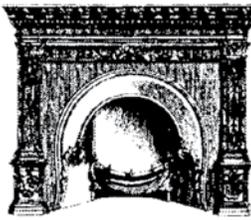
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Deep Inside This Stone Quiet House

The judge's brother who built this fortress in 1910
was after something permanent.
Something impervious to nature's malevolence.
So he recruited Italian stone masons who chiseled
these hundreds of granite blocks which rose above a stone foundation.
The same Italians who carved the headstones
in the local cemeteries. Their bodies answering
the ancestral call of some genetic code.
Their muscles chiseled like Atlas's.

And then, the judge's brother hired woodworkers—
craftsmen, from the Palmer Shipyard.
Men from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland...
to fashion mahogany panels for the dining room and
stair rails thick and smooth as well-oiled arms.
Woods dark, red, rich from the jungles of Brazil.
Hardwood floors. Solid mahogany doors with knobs of carved glass.

Wagonloads of slate hauled from state quarries were laid
on the roof like fish scales glistening in an October sun.
Then the house was done.
And it wasn't going anywhere.

Then, the families came and went: Fitches, Berrys, Moores, Greenhouses.
My sons toddled up these stairs with their flannels and blankets
and came down young men who packed up and moved away.
Then, their father followed.

Now, I am the single occupant listening to this house
as it makes the noises old houses make.
Sometimes it says to me: *I'm not going anywhere.*
And sometimes I answer: *Don't worry, neither am I.*

Melanie Greenhouse, Noank, October 2, 2007

Melanie Greenhouse has lived in the Charles Anderson house since 1984.

