

BARN AGAIN! *Celebrating an American Icon*



© Leland Burnham

The barn, like the town hall and the skyscraper, is a symbol of America. To traditional farmers, barns are the soul of the farm. To the general public, barns represent both our rural past and our agricultural present. They are monuments in the American landscape.

Nevertheless, barns are no longer the centers of industrial and community life they once were. Older barns were not designed to store the enormous machinery and harvests of today's large-scale farms. While renovated barns continue to play a vital role in agriculture, many farmers now consider the traditional, time-honored structures obsolete.

The exhibition *Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon*, which is coming to Connecticut this spring and summer, explores the barn as both a cultural and agricultural icon. It examines the building as an architectural structure and as a means of expressing beliefs about what our country was and could be.

In conjunction with the exhibition, Connecticut Preservation

News offers a series of reports about barns in Connecticut. Read on for the reports on the Trust's first-phase survey of historic barns and new studies from the State Historic Preservation Office, news on farmland preservation, and resources for understanding and preserving barns in your own town.

We hope this exhibition and the projects that it has sparked will help Connecticut residents to understand and appreciate our state's agricultural heritage and will inspire us all to find ways of preserving the physical aspects of that heritage. 🌸

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As Spring approaches, the Trust has been active around Connecticut. Preparations are underway for our Annual Meeting on April 5, which this year will celebrate the Trust's 30th anniversary. Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, will be the keynote speaker. We will also present preservation awards and get a behind-the-scenes look at Hartford's Colt Armory, where renovations are underway.

As it does every year, the legislative session offers opportunities and threats (see page 3). The Trust has been active and visible at the Capitol, testifying on historic tax credit bills, restoration of funds to the budget of the Commission on Culture and Tourism, an increase in funds for the Connecticut Humanities Council's Cultural Heritage Development Fund, and a new line item for Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants, administered by the Trust, at \$250,000.

In addition, the Trust has its own bond bill, SB 452, for funds to continue the restoration of our headquarters, the Whitney Armory Boarding House (c.1827). The Trust purchased the Boarding House in 1989 from the Regional Water Authority of South Central Connecticut (RWA), saving it from an uncertain future. Listed on the National Register as part of the Eli Whitney Gun Factory Site, it sits on land

owned by RWA. Founded by Eli Whitney, Jr. as the New Haven Water Company, RWA is currently building a spectacular \$45 million water treatment plant. The modest and dignified Boarding House and adjacent Whitney Barn (1816) will soon be framed by a 21st century landmark of public architecture and landscaping. As a gateway to Hamden and New Haven on Whitney Avenue, this confluence of significant industrial architecture spanning three centuries will awe visitors and neighbors alike.

Paying the bills is a constant battle for nonprofit organizations. To help meet the Trust's goal of greater financial stability and growth, we have hired Kathy Frederick, a development consultant from West Hartford. Kathy has started a development audit that will set the strategy for hiring permanent development staff for the first time in the Trust's history.

Todd Levine, a summer intern from several years ago, is back and helping us out again. Now a graduate of the Savannah College of Art and Design, Todd is helping us with brochures, our town greens website, and the Restoration Services Directory, as well as answering phones while looking for a position in preservation. He will be the man behind the camera at our 30th anniversary celebration. 

— Helen Higgins

"I look forward to an America which will not be afraid of grace and beauty, which will protect the beauty of our natural environment, which will preserve the great old American houses and squares and parks of our national past, and which will build handsome and balanced cities for our future."

John F. Kennedy - October 26, 1963

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Connecticut Preservation News

Editor: Christopher Wigren
Editor, Historic Properties Exchange: Anne Stillman
Graphic Design: J.M. Communications
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Legislative Report

As *CPN* goes to press, the General Assembly is in the early weeks of its 2005 session. The major issue is expected to be the state budget. The Office of Management and Budget has projected a large shortfall, and Governor Jodi Rell has presented a budget that calls for no net funding increases. As in past years, the Connecticut Trust is working as part of the larger Heritage Coalition to support the Commission on Culture and Tourism's budget requests, particularly its strategic goal of achieving parity in funding for arts and history activities. The Coalition also supports full funding for the CCT's Historic Restoration Fund — the state's only source of money for bricks-and-mortar restoration projects — which the governor's budget cuts completely.

To move the history funding closer to parity with the arts and to begin to address the enormous demand for Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants (HPTAG), the Trust is seeking a separate \$250,000 line item for HPTAGs, which are currently funded through the Connecticut Humanities Council's Heritage Development Fund (HDF). With the Heritage Coalition, the Trust is also seeking to restore the governor's proposed 10 percent to the HDF, as well as funds cut in 2001, to bring the Council granting programs back to \$1,400,000.

Other bills of interest to preservationists include *An Act Concerning Land Protection, Affordable Housing and Historic Preservation* (Proposed Bill No. 410), introduced by Sen. Donald Williams (D-29th Dist). If passed, this bill would

impose a surcharge on real estate recordings, the proceeds of which shall be used for historic preservation, affordable housing and farmland preservation. Sen. Andrew Roraback (D-30th Dist.) has also introduced a bill that calls for increasing the state sales tax by one-quarter of one percent in order to buy agricultural land or open space land or development rights.

Raised Bill No. 1089, *An Act Concerning Community Revitalization and the Adaptive Reuse of Certified Historic Structures* calls for expanding the state's tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic buildings, which currently covers only owner-occupied residential structures in targeted urban areas. Connecticut Circuit Rider Brad Schide testified in favor of the bill on behalf of the Connecticut Trust and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He recommended modifying the bill to expand its coverage beyond industrial buildings; to allow developers to use both state and federal tax credits on the same project; and to make its goal the encouragement not only homeownership but also of quality rental housing and economic development.

Senators Joseph Crisco (D-17th Dist.) and Martin Looney (D-11th Dist.) and Rep. Peter Villano (D-91st Dist.) have introduced a bill to grant up to \$450,000 in bond funds for ongoing documentation, repairs and restoration of the Connecticut Trust's headquarters, the Whitney Armory Boarding House (Proposed Bill No. 452). If the bill passes, the grant would still have to be authorized by the Bond Commission. 🌸

To track these and other bills, see the General Assembly website, www.cga.ct.gov.

Easements Threatened in Congress

Recommendations by a congressional committee could significantly cut or even eliminate tax incentives for preservation and conservation easements and thereby reduce the number of properties protected by easements. In response, the Connecticut Trust sent the following letter to all members of the state's congressional delegation:

Dear Senator/Representative:

We am writing on behalf of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, to urge you to do everything you can to protect full tax deductions for preservation and conservation easements. The Trust is a statewide nonprofit preservation organization chartered by the Connecticut General Assembly in 1975; it has 2,500 members and affiliates.

The Connecticut Trust has more than 20 years' experience in holding preservation easements. We currently hold easements on more than 20 historic buildings and sites across the state, ranging from Colonial farmhouses to historic factory housing to downtown office buildings. We have found that preservation easements are a valuable tool for preserving historic places while allowing them to remain in private ownership.

The staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation has recommended changes to the tax code that would drastically reduce or eliminate tax incentives for preservation easements that have been in place for more than 25 years. These recommendations seem to stem from recent cases in which donors claimed inflated values for easements, particularly in historic districts where local ordinances already restrict alterations. While certainly undesirable, these cases represent only a small fraction of the preservation easements that have been donated over the past 25 years. The Joint Committee's staff report has wildly over-reacted to a limited problem.

The JCT report ignores the fact that many, if not most, preservation easements cover properties that are *not* located in historic districts. It also assumes that preservation easements duplicate local historic district regulations. This is not necessarily true. Historic districts generally regulate

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GUILFORD. The Guilford Preservation Alliance (GPA) is seeking to encourage redevelopment of two long-neglected buildings that were once part of the town's original railroad station complex — an octagonal brick water tower and a brick engine house. Both were built in the 1870s and are important survivors of the vital railroad industry in Connecticut. They are contributing structures in Guilford Town Center Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places, as was the adjoining wooden station house, demolished in 2000. AMTRAK, the federally operated railroad system, owns the structures, but has done nothing to secure or protect them.

The buildings are rare reminders of the frequent maintenance and service that steam locomotives required. The locomotives had to be inspected, lubricated, and replenished with coal and water after each run. Most rail junctions and important stations had service facilities including a coal tower and water tank.

The engine house at the Guilford railroad station was built around 1875. The long side of the 36 by 64 foot building is divided into six bays, with two large arched openings on the east end where the locomotives were brought in to be serviced. According to an archaeological reconnaissance study of the Guilford Railroad Station for Connecticut Department of Transportation in 2001, very few brick engine houses remain in New England.

The water tower is an even rarer survivor. Water was a much more limiting factor than fuel in determining the range of a steam locomotive. Steam engines consumed huge amounts of water and had to stop repeatedly to refill their supply. Although sadly decrepit now, the water



Preston Maynard

Ornamental brickwork highlights the water tower at the Guilford railroad station. The Guilford Preservation Alliance is urging that the tower be restored and reused.

tower the Guilford train station is very possibly the only survivor in New England of an early form of water tower — a tank enclosed within a solid walled building. The tank on the second level held water supplied from a nearby well by a steam pump located on the first floor.

With the increase in commuter rail traffic, as well as the proximity to Guilford's waterfront, the GPA argues that these two historic structures can become important economic and cultural resources. In May and June of 2004, the organization retained the Yale Urban Design Workshop to lead brainstorming sessions on redeveloping the area around the station. GPA has also begun conversations with local officials about how it might help the town

acquire the railroad buildings from AMTRAK for repair and new use. The organization has committed \$10,000 for pre-development work that would help support the stabilization and ultimate restoration of these structures and assembled a development team of design, engineering and real estate professionals with Noyes-Vogt Architects at its head.

NEW CANAAN. Philip Johnson, a pioneer and promoter of Modern architecture in the United States, died on January 25 at the age of 98. Johnson first became prominent in the architectural world in 1932 as one of the organizers of the Museum of Modern Art's groundbreaking exhibition, "The International Style," which introduced Modern Movement architecture to the United States. In 1940 he returned to school to become an architect and practiced up until his death.

Johnson will be better known as a popularizer than as an innovator. Throughout his restless career he explored many styles, ranging from the spare and elegant modernism of Mies van der Rohe to the Postmodernism of the AT&T Building in New York (with its then-outrageous broken pediment) and the Deconstructionist visitor center he built at his New Canaan estate in 1995.

Jonathan Appell
Gravestone Conservator
Monumental Mason

18 Fenwood Ave.
West Hartford, Conn. 06110

Phone: 860-558-2785
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One constant in his work was history. Unlike many modernists, Johnson knew his architectural history and drew on it extensively, famously quipping, "One cannot *not* know history." Evidence is seen at his New Canaan home, where Johnson cited architectural influences as varied as ancient Mycenaean tombs and the neoclassicism of Sir John Soane. This interest in history also led him to play an active role in the unsuccessful effort to save Pennsylvania Station in New York, one of the great coalescing moments in the preservation movement.

Johnson's most famous building, one known around the world, is his own house in New Canaan, completed in 1949. A single room with all glass walls, it took the Modernist goals of open planning and integrating interior and exterior to their logical conclusion. Over the years, Johnson added a number of other buildings to the property, creating a miniature summary of his career that he called "the diary of an eccentric architect." The site was named a National Historic Landmark in 1997 (see *CPN*, May/June 1997). Johnson gave the estate to the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1986; it will eventually be opened to the public. Other Connecticut buildings by Philip Johnson include the Hodgson, Boissonas, and Wiley houses in New Canaan (the first of these designed with Landis Gores),

as well as the Kline Science Center and Yale Epidemiology Lab in New Haven.

NEW HAVEN. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) announced in December that the Yale Center for British Art, designed by Louis I. Kahn, has been selected to receive the 2005 AIA Twenty-five Year Award, which honors significant architectural landmarks completed 25-35 years ago that have withstood the test of time. Begun in 1973, one year before his death, and opened to the public in 1977, the Center is among Kahn's finest structures. Pellecchia & Meyers, formed in 1973 by two former members of Kahn's office, completed the building after Kahn's death in 1974.

When the building received an AIA Honor Award in 1978, the jury noted, "This building is a gentle urbane masterpiece. It offers a quiet foil to its more demonstrative neighbors and, from the interior, frames and augments them.... The interior spaces are well planned for easy movement through the exhibits. They frequently reveal surprising glimpses of one another. A quiet feeling of delight grows within you with the discovery of each new space, and the manner in which the whole is subtly revealed has an ever-surprising complexity."

Andrea Oppenheimer Dean wrote in a story on the building that ran in the

AIA Journal, "The new Yale Center for British Art serves as a fitting summation of [Kahn's] work and ideas.... In fact, many of the most forward-looking aspects of this building... are adaptations of Beaux-Arts principles firmly repudiated by most 'Modern' architects. Kahn returned to the use of natural light, though employing it in a completely novel way. Instead of undifferentiated spaces, he created rooms complementing the scale and tone of Paul Mellon's collection, never overwhelming it."

The Center was erected to house the largest, most comprehensive collection of British art outside the U.K. Located across the street from the Yale University Art Gallery, Kahn's first major commission, the Center was the first museum in the U.S. to incorporate retail shops on the street. A monumental yet restrained civic structure, the Center's taut exterior of matte steel and reflective glass becomes animated in the sunlight. Kahn said of it, "On a rainy day it will be like a gray moth, on a sunny day a butterfly."

Kahn believed that natural light is essential to fully appreciate the works contained within. Hence, the courtyards are awash in natural light that is then filtered into adjoining galleries through unglazed interior windows, while skylights provide illumination for the top-floor galleries.

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Richard Caspole

Above: Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

Right: Philip Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan reveals and reflects the landscape.



C. Wigen

New Studies Broaden the Picture of Connecticut Agriculture

Farming in Connecticut is usually identified with descendants of the state's earliest settlers. Two new studies from the state's Museum and Historic Preservation Division document agricultural activity by other ethnic groups.

The tobacco fields of Connecticut have long produced an important cash crop, and the labor-intensive production of shade tobacco provided employment for thousands of Connecticut residents, including African Americans. When the movement of African Americans from rural southern towns to northern cities, known as the Great Migration, began in the 1910s, Connecticut tobacco companies were some of the first in the country to utilize this newly available source of labor, and the recruitment of African Americans by Connecticut tobacco growers began in earnest around 1914. The state's black population doubled in the period between 1915 and 1930 and in the period during and after World War II it would increase further, due in large part to the employment practices of the tobacco industry.

During the summers of 1944 and 1947, Martin Luther King, Jr., the future civil rights leader and activist, spent time

harvesting tobacco in Connecticut. He was one of many African American men recruited by summer work programs administered through southern colleges and high schools, which were designed to ease the dearth of labor brought about by



This chicken coop in Guilford resembles many built for Jewish poultry farmers in the 20th century.

James Sexton

these groups of workers and their influences on Connecticut society. The research and resulting materials will provide the information necessary to produce an exhibition or brochure to travel with the Barn Again! ex-

hibit when it tours Connecticut. World War II. King's recently published letters reveal the impact his time in Connecticut had on his life. For the first time, he experienced a society in which he could worship, eat, and travel in the company of whites as an equal. King later wrote that beginning in that summer, "I felt an inescapable urge to serve society... a sense of responsibility which I could not escape."

At the same time, tobacco companies began contracting West Indian workers for the same purpose. West Indian tobacco

workers began new communities in the central valley and added their unique culture to the existing African-American community of Hartford. Current black populations in a number of Connecticut's cities and towns had their beginnings in the fields of Connecticut's Tobacco Valley. The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism's Museum and Historic Preservation Division is collaborating with the Simsbury Historical Society to research

these groups of workers and their influences on Connecticut society. The research and resulting materials will provide the information necessary to produce an exhibition or brochure to travel with the Barn Again! exhibit when it tours Connecticut. The Division is collaborating with the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford on a project that will focus exclusively on poultry farming, a very successful endeavor that by Jewish farmers. Starting with the Baron de Hirsch Fund era (1890-1940) and continuing to the present, Jewish egg farmers have played an important role in the success of this type of farming.

The practice and buildings of poultry farming begin at the henhouse/chicken yard level and proceed to large-scale "factory" type poultry buildings. An important goal of the project is to document the social conditions that produced this era of farming and made it possible for Jewish farmers to flourish in this specialized niche.

The project historian is Dr. Kenneth Libo, co-author of *World of Our Fathers*, winner of a National Book Award. He is also author of *We Lived There, Too*, a history of Jews in the American West. Dr. Libo's family includes Jewish farmers in the Norwich/Lisbon area. The project will also include three town historical societies and will seek to interview Jewish poultry farmers. The materials produced will be used in book, exhibit, and website formats. 🌸

— Cora Murray and Mary Donohue, CT Historic Preservation and Museum Division

Courtesy Mansfield Historical Society



Many Jewish farmers specialized in raising poultry in the early 20th century. This is the Schwartzberg chicken yard in Mansfield.

Beauty in the Tobacco Valley

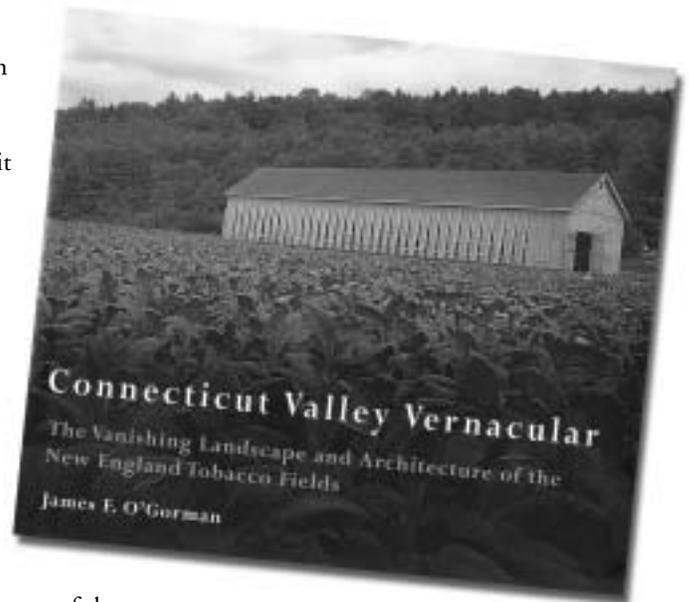
James F. O’Gorman, *Connecticut Valley Vernacular: The Vanishing Landscape and Architecture of the New England Tobacco Fields* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 108 pages.

Stretching from Middletown, Connecticut, to southern Vermont and New Hampshire, the Connecticut valley boasts some of the most fertile farmland in the United States. In the 19th century the region developed as center of tobacco growing. The result was a unique landscape distinguished by long, narrow tobacco barns and tented fields to provide shade and high humidity needed to grow high-quality tobacco for cigar wrappers. James F. O’Gorman, professor of architectural history at Wellesley College, describes the evolution of this landscape and the life that took place in it. Drawing on agricultural diaries, government reports, antismoking literature dating back at least to the 1840s, and historic photographs, he recreates the rhythm of the tobacco fields, the economics and sociology of tobacco farms, the arduous labor, and the uncertain returns.

Tobacco sheds (as the barns are properly known) are the valley’s most distinctive physical element. In the South, tobacco is cured by smoke, so barns there must be airtight. Connecticut Valley tobacco, on the other hand, is air cured, so

the sheds are built to open up to the breezes, a form that has remained almost entirely unchanged since it appeared in the mid-19th century. For O’Gorman, these sheds are not just useful, they are beautiful because they so completely fulfill their function. He quotes Henry Fowle Durant, the founder of Wellesley College, who said in 1877, “All beauty is the flower of use.”

Even more fragile than the sheds is the landscape of the shaded fields, created by stringing cloth on wires held up by poles. From the air, the valley was transformed into fields of white, lyrically described in Mildred Savage’s novel, *Parrish*, published in 1958 and made into a movie in 1961, as “acres and acres of land, covered with white cloth, stretched as far as the eye could see. A continuous tent, propped up with posts, looked in the glaring sunlight like an end-



less field of tree stumps in a countryside of snow... [or] a white ocean, ending at the horizon against the harsh brilliant blue of an unbroken skyline. And in the whole white expanse there was no hint of motion, not of tree nor of man.” Underneath the tents, “it was at least ten degrees hotter [than outside]. The air was damp and tropical and artificial to the senses, like hothouse air, and heavy with the sharp, sweet smell of tobacco.”

Distinctive but vulnerable, the sheds and their landscape are rapidly dwindling as suburban sprawl and the antismoking movement erode the amount of land devoted to tobacco growing. There are still working sheds — and even a few are still being built — but their future is uncertain. At the same time, O’Gorman found no tobacco sheds permanently preserved intact. Even at sites dedicated to tobacco-growing, the sheds have been cleaned up, made weathertight, given concrete floors — as O’Gorman says, they have lost “the rust of time.” Surely some historical society could make it their mission to preserve an unimproved tobacco shed, preferably with a field of shaded tobacco growing around it in the summer, so that Connecticut citizens can experience for themselves the beauty that O’Gorman finds in the tobacco landscape. 🌿

Other Books about Barns...

Auer, Michael J. *The Preservation of Historic Barns*. National Park Service Preservation Brief 20. Also available online at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief20.htm.

Caranvan, Jill. *American Barns: A Pictorial History*. Courage Books, 1995.

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Hubka, Thomas C. *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England*. University Press of New England, 1984.

Noble, Allen G. *The Old Barn Book*. Rutgers University Press, 1996.

Sloane, Eric. *An Age of Barns*. Voyageur Press, reprint 2001.

Visser, Thomas D. *Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings*. University Press of New England, 1997.

Vlach, John Michael, ed. *Barns*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2003.



James Sexton

Connecticut's oldest barns resemble structures the settlers knew in England. This barn was built for the Stiles family, who have farmed the same land in Southbury since the 1670s.

Connecticut's Barns: Relics of a Working Landscape

From the first, barns have been an integral part of the Connecticut landscape. Their story begins with the colony's first settlers, who came here in part because of its rich farmland. In order to take advantage of this resource, and to shelter crops and animals from the weather, some of the earliest buildings they created must have been barns. Sadly, no barns from this era remain except in the documentary and archeological records.

The earliest type of farm building to survive in Connecticut today is what modern scholars call an "English Barn." Based on grain warehouses of the colonists' homeland, it is a simple building with a rectangular plan, a pitched roof, and a door or doors located on one or both of its long sides. In the New World this traditional building type was reorganized, according to architectural historian John Michael Vlach, both for efficiency in use and economy in construction, into a multipurpose building that housed animals, grains and equipment. English barns dominated barn building in Connecticut

through the first quarter of the 19th century.

As with so many things, the 19th century was an era of change for barns, when traditional approaches to constructing and using these buildings changed dramatically. Beginning in the 1820s Connecticut farmers began to build barns with the main door on the gable end rather than under the eaves. This change had two practical results. Rather than shedding rain onto the dooryard, this arrangement guided precipitation away from the barn's doors. It also meant that the barn could be enlarged much more easily, simply by adding another bay to the length of the building.

The next decades saw the introduction of a basement under the barn to allow for easy collection and storage of a winter's worth of manure from the animals sheltered within the building. With the introduction of windows for light and ventilation, it became possible to shelter more animals in the basement. Additionally, these years saw the first use of ventilators or cupolas, now a hallmark of barns. The

mid-19th century also brought a new product to Connecticut, tobacco, which led to the introduction of new, specialized farm buildings, notably the ventilated tobacco barn or shed.

The way in which barns were constructed also began to change, with a move toward more standardized practices in timber framing. This standardized approach ultimately gave way to the balloon framed buildings and the mail order barns of the early 20th century.

Driving many of these mid-19th century innovations was the growth of publications aimed at making farmers more productive. While Connecticut had fostered earlier agricultural authors and reformers like 18th century Killingworth resident Jared Eliot, the wave of agricultural periodicals that began in the 1820s had a much greater impact on the built environment. Another factor was competition from the western regions of the growing country.

Toward the end of the century, a new type of farmstead appeared in Connecticut: the gentleman's farm, with buildings

by James Sexton

intended as much for display as for use. Fancy barns had long been a hallmark of economic success, but these barns were something new. They were frequently designed by famous architects and were part of expansive complexes that combined the luxury of a weekend retreat with the grit of a working farm. Of course, the grit was kept out of sight, and the farms were as likely to produce prize animals as saleable crops.

By the end of the 19th century Connecticut's farm population was decreasing. The land had been worked hard for more than two centuries, and modern transportation made it harder and harder to compete with the farms of the Midwest. Nonetheless, the state enjoyed a slight agricultural renaissance in the first half of the 20th century as immigrants from eastern Europe resettled the Yankees' abandoned farms and strove to make them into workable propositions. Not only did they put in the long hours of their predecessors, but they undertook new approaches to finding economic success as well. They made chicken raising into a big business. They banded together in cooperative organizations to take advantage of increased buying and bargaining powers. And they began some of the state's first agri-tourism, taking in summer boarders from the big cities.

But this rebirth did not last long. Although many family farms continued to supply local population centers with eggs, milk and some vegetables, the middle of the twentieth century heralded the decline of Connecticut's farms. Changes in the way Americans ate, increasing property values, and the growth of giant agri-businesses all made it harder for Connecticut farmers to make a living. As farms went out of business, many of their barns were no longer needed, and so were no longer maintained. The result was demolition by neglect. Another threat appeared in the form of suburban development. Since farming could no longer generate enough income, families sought a new way of getting money out of the land, which often was their largest asset. The result was the process, which continues today, of turning farmland into developments that have no place for a barn.

While the story seems dismal there are a few bright spots. A small number of Connecticut farms continue to survive, using old barns or even building new ones. Other barns are being preserved through adaptive use. And with renewed awareness for the important place of barns in Connecticut's past, further progress may be made in preserving this physical reminder of our agricultural heritage. 🌸

This essay was adapted from a study of historical themes, building types and regional architectural themes commissioned by the Trust as the first step toward a comprehensive survey of historically significant barns in Connecticut. The study was funded by the Connecticut Humanities Council and written by James Sexton, an architectural historian and preservation consultant from New Rochelle.



Like many gentleman farmers, Randolph Chandler erected a large and elaborate barn in 1888 on his estate, now in the Thompson Hill National Register district.

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Preserving Farmland

In Preston, one family's proposal for its farm threatens the future of the state's farmland preservation program, according to state officials and activists. The program, administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, allows the state to buy development rights to farmland as a way of reducing pressure for development, as well as property and inheritance taxes on farmland. The farms remain in private ownership and continue to pay local property taxes, but a permanent restriction on nonagricultural uses is placed on the properties. According to the Department of Agriculture website, the program has preserved 28,393 acres on 191 farms.

While the main goal of the program is to remove some of the economic barriers to farming, a secondary benefit is the preservation of the state's historic agricultural landscape. Connecticut residents have farmed the state's land for thousands of years, and much of the scenery that we regard as natural has in fact been shaped by agricultural activity.

Shawn Powers and his parents, Virginia Landis and Frederick Peacos, Jr., own the property in Preston known as the Ayer farm. The previous owner, Joseph Koniecko (who was Peacos' stepfather), sold the development rights to the 221-acre farm to the state for \$232,603 in 1986. The restriction on the Ayer farm forbids any activity detrimental to its agricultural potential. "No activity shall be carried on which is detrimental to the actual or potential agricultural use of the Premises, or detrimental to soil conservation, or to good agricultural practices."

The family wants to build a golf course on part of their land. They argue that as open space, the golf course is not incompatible with agriculture, and that income from the course will support farming on the rest of the property. The golf course is part of a larger plan to convert the farm into a tourist destination that would also include organic farming and pick-your-own produce on most of the land. The family points to Lyman Orchards in Middlefield as a model. (There is a golf course at Lyman Orchards, but it was built before the farmland preservation program was established.) The town of Preston has granted all approvals needed for construction.

Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal filed suit in November to stop construction of the golf course, claiming that the cuts and fills required for the golf course would jeopardize the agricultural quality of the soil. On November 5, the court granted an injunction stopping construction until the suit could be tried.

Preservationists point out that allowing a golf course on the Ayer farm could undo the farmland preservation program. If uses like golf courses that generate greater incomes are allowed, then there will be pressure for similar development on other parcels and the whole purpose of the restrictions, to keep farmland affordable for farming, will be lost. "The farmland preservation program is essential because it creates a land bank of affordable farmland for the future. The land on which the state holds the development rights arguably may be the only land that farmers are able to access, to lease or to purchase in the future, given the current real estate value of land," said Jiff Martin of the Working Lands Alliance, a farmland preservation program. 🌱

For more information on farmland preservation, see www.ct.gov/doag and www.workinglandsalliance.org.

Barn Again: Celebrating an American Icon

Barn Again! Celebrating an American Icon was developed by the National Building Museum in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Adapted for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), it comes to Connecticut thanks to SITES in partnership with the Federation of State Humanities Councils. The Connecticut Humanities Council is sponsor of the Connecticut tour.

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Around the State, cont'd from page 5

Their angled louvers and baffles block bluish north light and screen ultraviolet rays, admitting larger quantities of light when the sun is low than when it is higher in the sky.

Kahn emigrated to the U.S. from Estonia at the age of four. After receiving his bachelor of architecture degree from the University of Pennsylvania, he taught at Yale from 1947 to 1957 and later became dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. In the mid-1950s, Kahn rose to prominence in the field, receiving significant awards and commissions. Four other Kahn buildings have received the Twenty-five Year Award, including the Yale University Art Gallery across the street from the British Art Center.

BRISTOL. Two local historic districts proposed for the Federal Hill neighborhood were narrowly defeated in separate votes in December, but organizers remain optimistic that the third time is the charm. Most of the 56 buildings in High Street and the 141 buildings in Federal Hill Green were built between 1870 and 1930, and much of the districts are within a National Register Historic District. Members of the Local Historic District Study Committee felt that a recent upturn in historic awareness and neighborhood pride indicated strong support for a local historic district, and they were right, but it was not strong enough.

The votes were close: 58 percent of owners in the proposed High Street district voted in favor, as did 62 percent in Federal Hill Green. Connecticut state law requires the affirmative vote of 67 percent of the owners to establish a local historic district. The large number of absentee landlords and investor-owned multifamily houses may have played a role in the districts' defeat.

The study committee has yet to schedule a date for voting on Overlook, the third and final proposed district. This 101-building district has a higher percentage of owner-occupied homes, including several that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Members of the Committee intend to monitor the return of ballots, to make sure that known supporters don't forget to vote.

— *Craig Minor, Bristol*



Abel Bradley house, Westport.

WESTPORT. Local preservationists are rallying to prevent the demolition of the Abel Bradley house on Sturges Highway. Two developers bought the 2.5-acre property in October, 2004, with plans to build a new house on it. They applied for demolition permit in early December.

According to the Fairfield County Preservation Trust, the house was built about 1800 by Abel Bradley, a boot maker and veteran of both the American Revolution and the War of 1812. The Westport Historic District Commission describes the house as "one of the most authentic and complete early houses in Westport. Additionally, it is the only known gambrel with the graceful bellcast roof shape."

Working under a 90-day delay of demolition that began in December, a group of neighbors, friends, community

leaders and organizations has formed the Coalition for Preservation of the Bradley House. They are sponsoring a National Register nomination and hope to find a buyer for the property who will commit to preserving the house. The group has support from the Connecticut Trust, the Fairfield County Preservation Trust and the Westport Historical Society, and is now seeking donations to purchase the property if all other efforts fail.

The Connecticut Trust is serving as a pass-through for the unincorporated group, so that donations can be tax-deductible. In addition, Connecticut Circuit Rider Brad Schide is working with the group.

For more information, see the Fairfield County Preservation Trust website: www.fairfieldcountypreservation.org/bradley/index.htm. 🌸

Best Places, cont'd from page 16

Housing for North Grosvenordale's workers stands in stark contrast to the elegant and imposing mill. Repetitive rows of plain, wooden tenements, each housing up to as many as twelve families, sit overlooked by the mill, literally in its shadow. The decorative embellishments of the mill are absent, the materials insubstantial in contrast to its solid brick, stone and iron. Some are located on low-lying land wedged between the river and the railway, hardly a salubrious location. While houses for the foremen are built of brick, they too are small, utilitarian and plain, and perch awkwardly along a hillside abutting the mill.

Textile work was regimented and

repetitive, hot, noisy and sometimes dangerous. Workers had to be on time and work long hours; illness or absence meant not getting paid or even losing one's job. The housing reflects their status — nearly anonymous, interchangeable. Most Providence investors in Windham County mills, Grosvenor included, were absentee owners who paid a supervisor to live nearby and manage the day-to-day affairs of the business. By the 1930s, the North Grosvenordale supervisor had moved to Thompson Hill, next door to the Gothic Revival mansion built by the uncle of the Mason heiress. Soon after, the company sold out, leaving the workers of the single-industry town unemployed — but still under the watchful eye of the now silent mills. 🌸

— *Nina E. Harkrader*

Easements Threatened in Congress, cont'd from page 3

only the portions of a building that are visible from a public way. Preservation easements, on the other hand, can regulate changes to other portions of buildings, including interiors. In addition to limiting alterations, they can require a high level of maintenance, putting an additional burden on the property owner. If an easement on an historic district property makes a measurable difference in the property's value, a qualified appraisal should reveal that; if it makes no difference in property value, the appraisal should reveal that, too.

In addition, the JCT report maintains that the variety of local regulations make it too difficult for the IRS to be sure that easement valuations are valid. But the IRS has to wade through those same regulations, as well as a host of other local factors, in valuing properties for inheritance taxes, outright donations, or other tax purposes. Why is it an unreasonable burden for the agency to check up on property valuations in one case and not in another?

Finally, the report argues incorrectly that preservation easements do little to accomplish preservation goals. It says, "...tax incentives should be targeted to those persons who are most likely to modify their behavior in substantial part because of the provision of the tax benefit" (page 284). But the point of an easement is to protect the property from *future* owners, who may not share that motivation.

In short, the JCT recommendations constitute an overreaction to a problem whose extent has been exaggerated. If adopted, they could seriously damage the effectiveness of a tool that has made possible the preservation of many important historic sites, at a very modest public expense. Here are two recent Connecticut examples that show how preservation easements can benefit the greater community:

• **Benjamin Osborne farm, Southbury.**

The Connecticut Trust worked with the Trust for Public Land and the Southbury Land Trust to preserve an historic farm-

stead. The land trust holds 90 acres of public open space, while the farm buildings, protected by a preservation easement, were returned to private ownership and the tax rolls.

• **Former SNET Headquarters, New Haven.** A private developer received federal rehabilitation tax credits for converting this downtown landmark to market-rate apartments. The Connecticut Trust's easement protects the government's investment in this preservation project. Without the potential for tax deductions, the future will hold many fewer success stories like these.

On behalf of the Trust's members, we look forward to hearing from you about your commitment to maintaining full tax deductibility for preservation and conservation easements, with reasonable reforms as needed. If you or your staff have any questions about easements, we will be happy to answer them. 🌸

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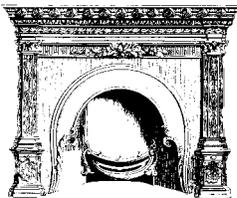
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Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

940 Whitney Avenue
Hamden, CT 06517-4002
Phone: (203) 562-6312
Fax: (203) 773-0107
Email: web@cttrust.org
Web: www.cttrust.org

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North Grosvenordale: Elegance, Utility and Power

Nineteenth-century industrial buildings are an imposing yet little understood legacy of Connecticut's era as an industrial powerhouse. Now often perceived as useless or dangerous, slated for demolition, or simply crumbling, they are seldom appreciated for their architectural merit or message. In Windham County, however, where textile mills reigned supreme from the turn of the 19th century through the 1930s, there are still a few places where a glimpse of past industrial glory can be found, and one of the best is North Grosvenordale.

The first textile mills in the area were located downstream in a place known as Masonville after its then-owners. In 1848, Providence physician and businessman William Grosvenor, who had married the Mason heiress, assumed control of these mills. After the Civil War, in order to take advantage of expanding markets and improved technology, Grosvenor purchased the water privilege upstream of his factories. In 1872 he built a new, much larger, textile complex there to designs by Providence mill engineer F. P. Sheldon. It was an ambitious project: a four-story mill more than 450 feet long, with a 135-foot wing projecting from the rear — nearly 200,000 square feet of space. Thanks to Sheldon's expertise, the new mill was a model of practicality and efficiency. The narrow footprint, in combination with the numerous large windows, allowed for maximum light. Interiors are vast open spaces broken up by minimal columns for support. The T-shaped plan allowed for efficient power transmission from the ell. The stair towers, separate from the main portion of the mill for fire safety, contained cisterns to provide pressure for fire hoses.

But the mill is more than merely practical; Sheldon and Grosvenor consciously made it impressive, too. Driving or walk-

ing down the hill into the village, the viewer sees tall, powerful yet elegant brick towers shooting skywards. Located above the river, and visible throughout the town, the mill looms over all and proclaims its importance by virtue of its siting and its form. A corbelled cornice edges the roofline, while long, rows of arched windows line the façade, punctuated by the imposing stair towers detailed with pilasters, arched window hoods, and ornately corbelled belfries with bell-shaped roofs.

Nineteenth-century factory owners used industrial architecture as an advertisement. In many period illustrations, their factories — smoke coiling out of numerous chimneys, freight cars nearby — are pictured with landscaped surroundings, and even with well-dressed ladies apparently strolling in the gardens. The combination of stylish buildings, smoke and bustle, all in a fine setting, suggested modern efficiency.

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THE *Best Places* IN CONNECTICUT

