



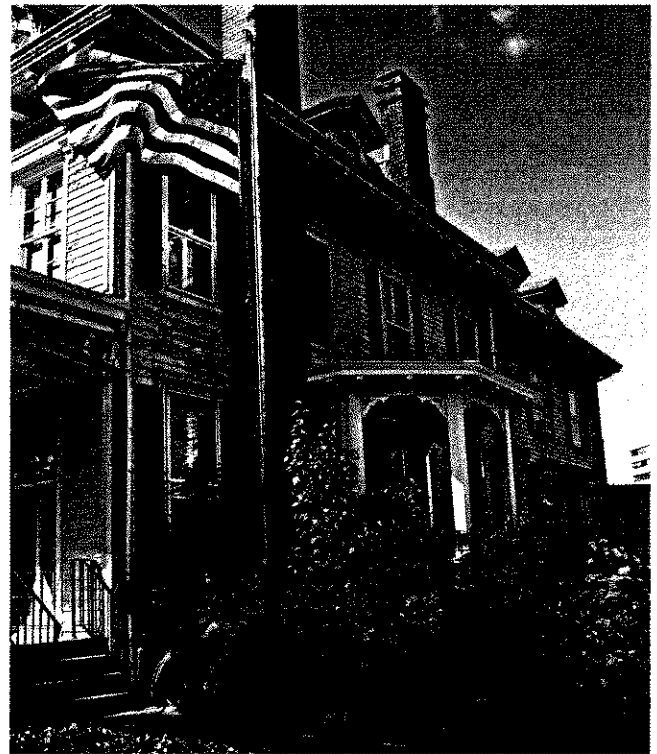
Historic Neighborhood News

FALL 2015

RENÉE KAHN, EDITOR

Resurrecting the Rectory

The Annual General Meeting of Historic Neighborhood Preservation will be held on Tuesday, October 6th, at 6:30 p.m. at the Rectory of the Basilica of Saint John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church, 279 Atlantic St. Rev. Msgr. Stephen M. Di Giovanni will speak about resurrecting the rectory.



He will tell the story of how a derelict building destined for demolition was transformed into the outstanding example of mid-19th century Victorian architecture it is today. A tour will follow. When the Monsignor arrived in 1998, he began to peel away the layers of

insensitive alteration and decay to reveal the building's intrinsic beauty. His talk, held in the restored double parlor, will describe what he found and his efforts to convince church authorities that this was a building worth saving.

The Rectory, originally the Knowlton-Carter House, was built as a private home in 1850 and purchased by the Church in 1886. Designed in the fashionable Greek Revival style, it was later enlarged and transformed into an Italianate villa. Investigations by the Monsignor revealed much of the original

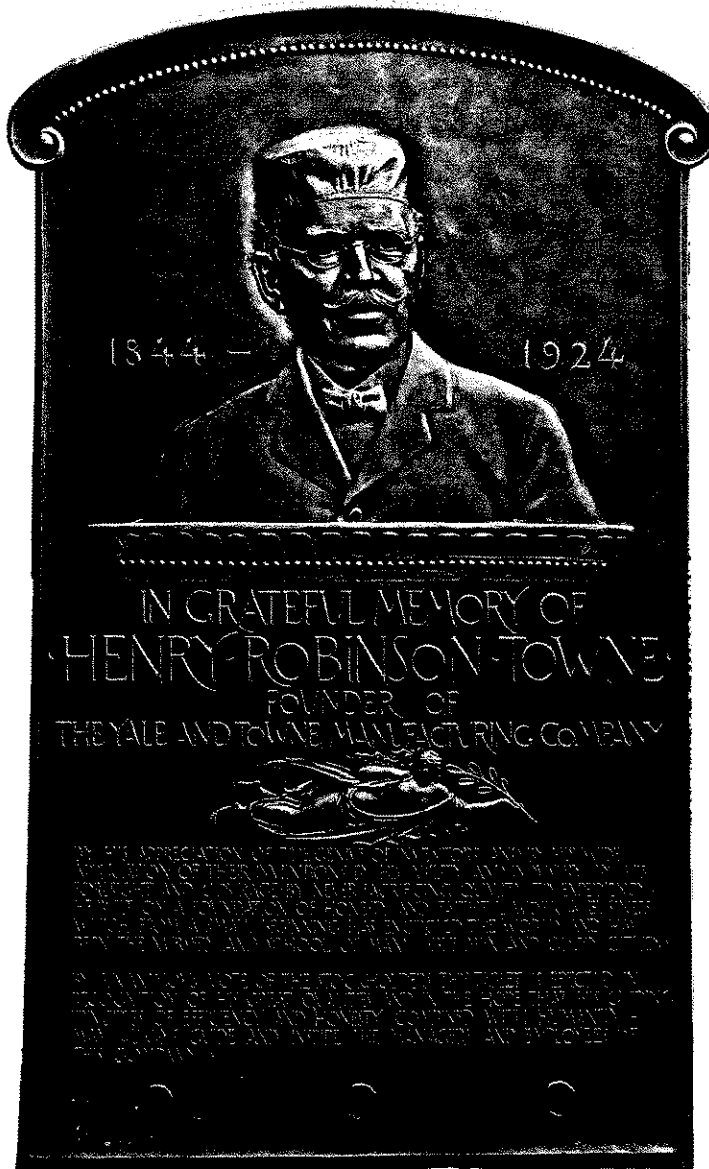
plasterwork and wall treatments, including faux marble frescoing in the main entrance hall and stair.

We look forward to having you join us. If you are not a current member, we hope you will use this opportunity to become one. Please let us know if you are planning to attend by emailing admin@hnppinc.org or leaving a message at 203.329.3705. A light supper will be served. Parking is available on the street, in the Bell Street Garage, and in the lot behind the Church, accessed from Bell Street and Tresser Boulevard. HNN

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Box 368, 65 High Ridge Road, Stamford, Connecticut 06905 www.hnppinc.org execdirect@hnppinc.org 203.325.4278

In Memory of Henry R. Towne, Founder of Yale & Towne



A FEW WEEKS AGO, we received a call from Heyman Properties, former owner of the 20-acre Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company site. They were in the process of moving from White Plains to New York City and wanted to know if we were interested in some material they had kept when they sold the property to Antares, which later sold it to its present owner, Building and Land Technology (BLT). "Bring a truck," we were advised.

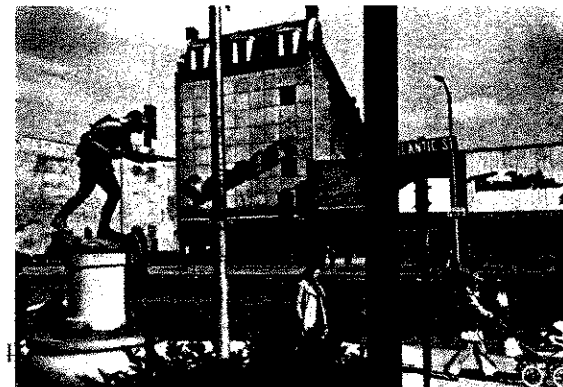
The truck, as anticipated, was needed to carry a 48" high bronze plaque memorializing Henry Robinson Towne, produced by the highly regarded Gorham Manufacturing Company after Towne's death in 1924. Yale & Towne was established in the South End of Stamford in 1868 by the inventor of the modern key, Linus Yale, in partnership with a manufacturing genius, H. R. Towne. After Yale's death, Towne grew the company into the largest manufacturer of hardware in the world, the mainstay of Stamford's economy for almost a century.

But what are we going to do with the plaque? It weighs close to one hundred pounds. Our first choice is to return it to its original location at Yale & Towne, an option currently under consideration by the site's present owner, BLT. Other possibilities are the Yale & Towne archive housed at the Jeremy Richard Library at the University of Connecticut campus in Stamford or perhaps Stamford's Government Center. It's definitely not something to put over the sofa.

We'll keep you informed. HNN

Lee Friedlander Photographs Stamford's Doughboy

IN OUR LAST ISSUE, we tried to shed some light on the Doughboy statue (it turns out there are two identical statues) that honor Stamford's World War I soldiers. A reader of the newsletter, J. Edward Greene, sent us a copy of this image taken in 1973 by noted photographer Lee Friedlander and currently in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Friedlander, born in 1934, was influenced by Walker Evans and Robert Frank and shared their interest in the urban scene. We have no idea how he got to Stamford, but this view of the original Doughboy on Atlantic Street with Sarner's Department Store in the background is familiar to anyone who lived here at the time.



17 Belltown Road

Our Latest Historic Density Bonus Application

WHEN THE KNIGHT & GRABOWSKY Construction Company first approached us about a building they had just purchased, we shook our heads. If ever there seemed an unlikely candidate for a special exception bonus for an historic building, it was 17 Belltown Road, a plain vanilla box lacking any architectural character. But wait! What did it look like originally? And what might lie underneath the present siding?

When we research a house for eligibility for the bonus we look at several things. First and foremost, we look at the building's age; that tells us what it might have looked like. If there are any remaining architectural elements, we try to reuse or replicate them. But what if, as in this house, virtually nothing of the original detail remains: no porch, no gable trim, no door, no windows?

This is where we become architectural sleuths. Our first step is to determine the age of the building; that will tell us its original style and what is missing. We do this by looking at old maps. Is it on the 1867 map? No. Is it on the more detailed 1879 Hopkins map? Yes. That means it was built between 1867 and 1879, a modest farmhouse probably with Italianate or late-Greek Revival decorative elements, one of a dozen structures built right after the Civil War in Belltown (named after the Bell family), most of which still survive. By the late 1860s,

Today



Belltown had begun to expand into a small village that probably served local farms and nearby estates along Strawberry Hill. In 1848, when the railroad arrived in Stamford, it brought with it wealthy New York "commuters" who built elaborate country estates. In addition, the expansion of the New Canaan Railroad branch along

Hope Street in 1868 brought small factories and further growth to the area.

Next, we do a title search which shows us that the house was built in 1875 by a carpenter named Frank (Franzk) Veit who lived in the South End but moved in 1885 to Strawberry Hill, probably to this house. The Veits remained prominent in Stamford for decades and Mr. Veit's son was a Captain in the Fire Department.

Once we establish the date of construction, we can begin to work back to the missing architectural details. Houses, then as now, imitated one another with builders using standard plans and local lumberyards. We then begin to search the area for houses of comparable vintage that still retain porches and other trim. We discover a nearby farmhouse with an original c.1870 entryway probably similar to Mr. Veit's. We check the popular pattern books of the period for moldings and porch details. When the existing siding is removed, we may find telltale marks indicating lost trim. Because the porch is so close to the ground, we do not need to worry about railings. Little by little, using physical evidence and educated guesses, we create a period piece that will enhance the entire street and hopefully encourage owners of other historic buildings to follow suit.

Can't wait! HNN

Tomorrow?



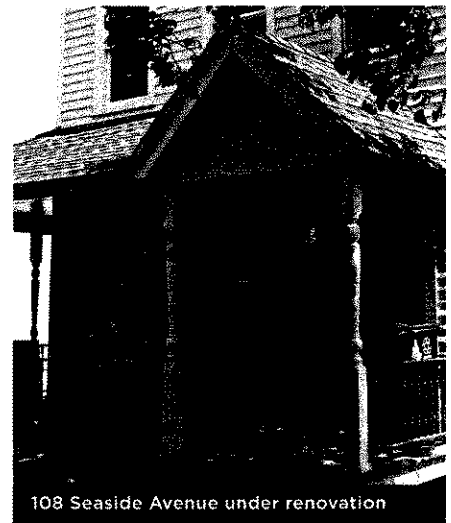
The Farmhouse Survives!



108 Seaside Avenue before renovation

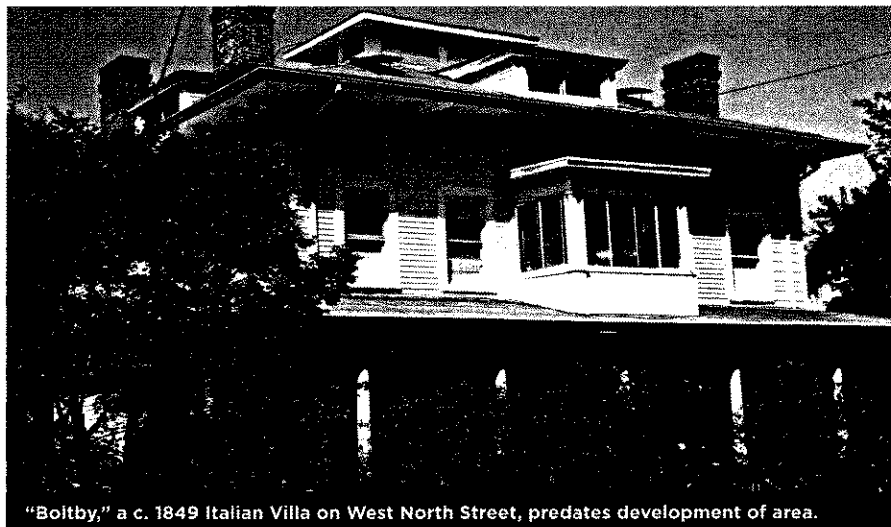
108 Seaside Avenue, one of the oldest surviving buildings in the Cove, is being refurbished and put back into use. Known in the neighborhood as "the farmhouse" because of its resemblance to a typical 19th-century farmhouse, it was threatened with demolition. Wes Haynes, Director of HNP, succeeded in persuading the current owners, Seaside RE Group, LLC, to go the 7.3 route allowing extra density on the site in return for an historically-sensitive rehabilitation of the circa 1890 building, which may have housed employees of nearby estates.

The Queen Anne-style L-shaped porch with its turned posts was retained. Vinyl siding was removed, revealing original clapboards and scalloped shingles. HNN



108 Seaside Avenue under renovation

Surveying the Heights



"Boltby," a c. 1849 Italian Villa on West North Street, predates development of area.



160 HUBBARD AVENUE

compendium of early-20th century Eclectic styles, starting in the early 1900s with the distinguished pair of Mission-style houses at 130 and 160 Hubbard Avenue. From there, we encounter examples of every popular architectural style from Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Tudor, Spanish Eclectic to Four-Squares and Bungalows. There is even an elegant mid-19th century Italianate villa located near the corner of Adams Avenue and West North Street that dates back to the arrival of the railroad.

Several years ago, the area appeared to be in decline; however, this is no longer the case. We are planning a walking tour of the district with its lovely, well-kept homes and tree-lined streets for members of HNP and the Hubbard Heights Neighborhood Association. HNN

WE ARE PLEASED to report that the Hubbard Heights Historic District National Register nomination is currently wending its way to the State of Connecticut National Register Review Board and then for final approval to the National Park Service in Washington, DC. When the nomination was completed by Tod Bryant of Historic Resources, a preservation consulting firm in Norwalk, CT, the Hubbard Heights Association sponsored a presentation to property owners. Not only was there no opposition to the 520-structure (including garages) district, residents of the blocks between Bridge Street and the Rippowam River, whose properties were adjacent to but not originally part of the historic district, asked to be included. Mr. Bryant, with permission from Hartford, happily complied. The state tax credits for rehabilitation of buildings listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places have recently been extended to single family, owner-occupied homes for the first time. More information is available



128 HUBBARD AVENUE

at www.cultureandtourism.org. This user-friendly benefit may be responsible for this show of interest; more likely it is because of homeowner concern over development pressures that may adversely affect their quality of life.

Hubbard Heights is one of several residential neighborhoods that developed from the early 1900s to the 1960s to serve a growing population that, because of its proximity to the railroad, included many commuters to New York City. Originally farmland, the area was dominated by properties belonging to the Hubbard family who built several grand homes with views of Long Island Sound, only one of which survives. Interestingly enough, Stamford was supposed to have been built (like Rome) on seven hills, all of which were dominated by lavish Victorian villas that enjoyed healthful hilltop breezes; the few that remain have been adapted, like the Hubbard Mansion, to other, mostly institutional uses.

What makes Hubbard Heights of such interest is its architectural diversity. Its neatly subdivided 94 acres is a veritable



214 HUBBARD AVENUE



117 HUBBARD AVENUE



272 HUBBARD AVENUE

Hubbard Mansion Takes on a New Life

THE HUBBARD HEIGHTS Historic District is dominated by a hilltop mansion built by the prestigious Hubbard family in 1869 and used as a private residence for eight decades. By the mid-twentieth century the Second Empire mansion, largely unchanged from its original appearance, was long out of fashion, engulfed by its former extensive land holdings now subdivided into compact lots developed with residences. But the mansion had a second act thanks to the Missionary Sisters of Mother of God who purchased it in 1945 for use as a convent and a Ukrainian Catholic girls' school named after their order. Mother of God fit in well with the neighborhood and increased enrollment with Stamford's growing Ukrainian community which strove to keep its native language and culture alive. By 1969, the school needed to expand and it renovated the former mansion, adding a new wing at its rear. The architect, a Canadian-born Ukrainian named Julien K. Jastremsky, was a modernist who had designed many of the major Ukrainian Catholic centers of worship and education in North America. Jastremsky carried out an exceptionally sensitive conversion of the building into a code-compliant school. In place of the mansion's original front porch, the architect added a central stair tower to the façade, faced with the same stone used throughout the building and reminiscent of Chateausur-Mer in Newport and its many imitators when the style was in vogue. The stone was likely quarried from the rear where the new addition of contemporary design was added. It is not known if Jastremsky planned the work with an awareness of nascent international standards for updating historic properties then being developed in Europe, but the outcome was the same, for it kept intact the form of the original mansion with its beautiful stonework and mansard roof, while providing a much-needed gym and auditorium space impossible to capture within the original core without gutting its largely intact interior.

Although the school closed in 1993, the Sisters remained in residence, running a nursery school on the property until fairly recently. Efforts to market the site were unsuccessful until two nearby property owners, fearful of the loss of the mansion and concerned as to what might replace it, pooled their resources and purchased the



building, not quite sure of what they were going to do with it. The most logical solution, and the one that presented the fewest zoning issues, was to return it to its most recent use as a school on the first floor and dormitory space on the upper two stories. Elena Kalman, AIA, was hired to design the alterations.

The Beacon School, a small local private school that focuses on educating the gifted, recently moved its classrooms to the building. Arrangements have been made for other nearby private schools to house their out-of-town students there. With an opening date of September 1, the past nine months were hectic to say the least: meeting current Building and Fire codes, updating electrical systems and plumbing, installing an elevator, building a commercial kitchen...all challenges that needed to be met in a short period of time.

Since the nearby property owners who purchased the building from the Missionary Sisters of Mother of God would like to remain anonymous, we aren't able to thank them publicly but they know how proud we are of them and how delighted we are they took the risks they did to save one of Stamford's landmark buildings. By the way, we forgot to mention that they plan to take advantage of the Federal and State tax credits for rehabilitation of a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

It's one of the reasons the bottom line works. HNN

NEW STATE TAX CREDIT SPURS HISTORIC SURVEYS

Over the years, we have discovered that there's nothing like an economic incentive to encourage historic preservation. In the past year or two, there has been increased interest on the part of residents of communities surrounding Downtown Stamford in having their neighborhood surveyed and eventually listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places. The City of Stamford currently has several designated areas including the South End, the Downtown, the Revonah area and Old Long Ridge Village (currently in the process of expanding its boundaries). In recent months, new State tax credits have ramped up interest from other neighborhoods, eager to have access to the new State credits that allow up to 3 million dollars for each fiscal year in corporate tax credits. Some of the requirements are:

- The building must be listed on the National or State Register (hence the interest in having an Historic Resource inventory done which could lead to listing).
- Provides a thirty percent tax credit up to \$30,000 per dwelling unit for the rehabilitation of 1-4 family houses. One unit must be owner-occupied for five years.
- Requires minimum of \$15,000 in qualified "restorative" rehabilitation.

The link to the State website is:
www.cultureandtourism.org/cct/cwp/vie_w.asp?a=3933&q=302270

Here's the Latest on the Hoyt Barnum House Move

BOTH CITY OFFICIALS and leadership of the Stamford Historical Society have agreed to move the 1699 Hoyt Barnum House, the oldest building in the city. The plan is to lift the house off its present site at 711 Bedford Street and sell the land to the city for construction of a much-needed new Police Headquarters.

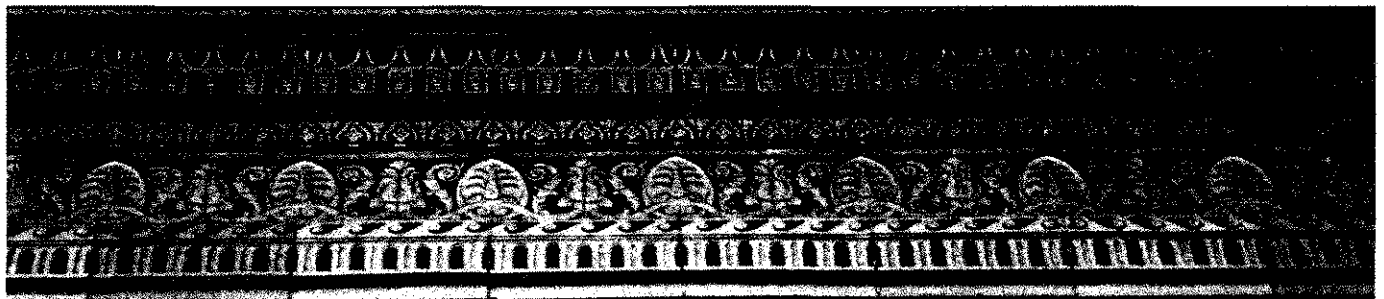
Many preservationists expressed concern as to the wisdom of the plan, citing the difficulty of moving a three-hundred-year-old structure without damaging historic fabric, as well as the potential loss of its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, a major source of funds and status. They were also troubled by the loss of the timber-frame building's historic context,



a rocky knoll on the outskirts of what was once Colonial Stamford. However, the City decided that the need for a new police station outweighed these concerns. The Stamford Historical Society also favored the move, citing their ability to make greater use of the building for educational purposes if it

were adjacent to their present headquarters at the former Martha Hoyt School on High Ridge Road.

The concern now is to make sure that the building is moved in as few pieces as possible, with as little damage to historic fabric as possible. The City is now in the process of hiring an architectural firm to oversee the process and after interviewing several firms appears to have chosen Christopher Williams Architects (CWA) the winner of the contract, a firm with prior experience moving historic houses. In their interview, they presented an ingenious plan to take the building across the Merritt Parkway, keeping most of the structure intact. We'll know more about cost when the details of the contract are finalized. HNN



A multicolored terra-cotta frieze encircles the original 1916 portion of the Atlantic Street Post Office.

What's Happening to Our Beautiful Downtown Post Office?

THINGS ARE LOOKING pretty positive on the Post Office front. Local preservationists achieved a tentative agreement with the Capelli Group from White Plains, purchasers of the Beaux Arts-era Post Office on Atlantic Street. Preservation architect Elena Kalman, AIA, was hired to come up with a plan that would allow Capelli to keep the 1939 rear section of the National Register-listed building and still have a workable entry ramp into the parking garage for the site. Ms. Kalman

developed her idea of creating a porte-cochère entry out of two window bays, while keeping the remainder of the building relatively intact. She also proposed moving some of the interior postal boxes (made by Yale & Towne in Stamford) to open up the lobby and the work area, providing a better connection between the two.

On August 18th, Ms. Kalman, Kathleen Hennessy, an architect representing the Capelli Group, and Wes Haynes of HNP met with Todd

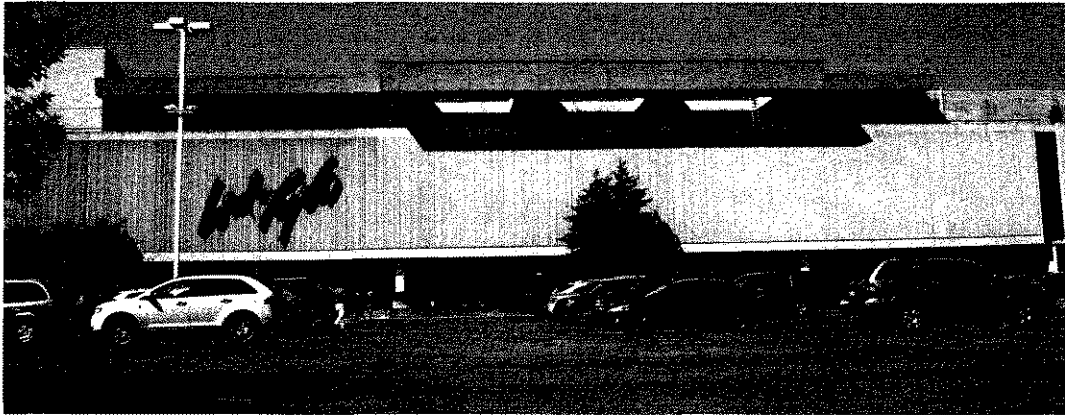
Levine of the State Historic Preservation Office for a preliminary review of Ms. Kalman's plans, which will be presented to SHPO in the next month or two. Mr. Levine was generally satisfied that the new plans met Federal requirements but expressed some concerns about changes to the basement windows facing a driveway between the Post Office and new construction to the north. Mr. Haynes offered to make the case before SHPO staff, calling it "a great idea that will open up greater potential use for the building." HNN

Modernist Icon to Get Second-Floor Addition

THE LORD & TAYLOR Department Store, located in the Bull's Head area of Stamford, is planning to expand its second floor in an architecturally sympathetic manner, allowing it to remain competitive on its current hilltop site. The 150,000-square-foot,

modernist structure was built in 1969 and was listed on the State Register of Historic Places in 2009. It was designed by architect Andrew Geller, a Vice President of Raymond Loewy/Snaith. Geller, who was also a painter and graphic designer, was noted for his idiosyncratic beach houses described

as "sculptural" and was responsible for the distinctive Lord & Taylor signature logo on the side of the building. Plans for the addition were unanimously approved by Stamford's Historic Preservation Advisory Commission (HPAC) at its September meeting. HNN



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MEMBERSHIP

- \$40 Friend
- \$100 Advocate
- \$500 President's Circle
- \$1000 Founder's Circle

The HNP is a non-profit, tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization

dedicated since 1977 to the preservation of historic buildings.

We would appreciate your help in achieving these goals.

Historic Neighborhood News

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HNP

Historic Neighborhood Preservation

Historic Neighborhood Preservation
Box 368
65 High Ridge Road
Stamford, CT 06905
www.hnppinc.org

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Home Sweet Home (Free Money)

CREATING AFFORDABLE HOUSING units in Stamford's current market is no easy matter. One of the only tools the City of Stamford has available is HOME Home Investment Partnership Program funds, administered by the City's Community Development Office. A maximum of \$20,000 per unit can be loaned for 30 years with no interest or principal due until the end of the loan. The money can be used for either new construction or rehabilitation. In evaluating feasibility for older buildings, the SCDO advises property owners to take a good look at the entire site to see if the Historic Density Bonus (Section 7.3 of the Stamford Zoning Regulations) can be used to add additional units. Check with Erik Larson ELarson@StamfordCT.gov or Sarah Pour SPour@StamfordCT.gov at the SCDO on the 10th floor of the Government Center for further details and to see if your property qualifies. www.stamfordct.gov/community-development/pages/home-program

A Cautionary Tale

*T*HIS ARTICLE is for anyone thinking of tearing down an historic building and replacing it with something new. A couple of years ago, a local builder called us into his office to tell us about his plans to demolish a building on Bank Street, one of a row of early -20th century commercial structures that contribute to the Downtown Stamford National Register Historic District. We tried to explain why he should save the building, but he was adamant; it was not in his plan. Now, at least two years later, the old building is long gone, but nothing new has taken its place. We asked a builder friend why and he said he had heard that unforeseen new regulations and fees of "up to half a million dollars" were slowing things up.

We asked our friend who has been a developer for over twenty years to prepare a comparison of why saving the old building might now, in light of innumerable new regulations and requirements, be preferable to new construction, especially if the building is listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

NEW CONSTRUCTION

Requires all new utility connections
Must meet current parking requirements
Stringent new drainage requirements
Lots of new engineering fees
"As Built" certifications required
New construction fees always higher

KEEPING THE OLD

Uses existing utilities
Accepts existing parking
Drainage as it exists
Avoids engineering fees
Avoided
Lower fees for rehab

So, if you combine the above with tax credits and zoning bonuses given by Section 7.3, the Historic Density Bonus of the Stamford Zoning Regulations, you come up with lots of reasons to save the old. Too bad it's too late for the building that occupied this lot. HNN

