



Historic Neighborhood News

SPRING 2015

RENÉE KAHN, EDITOR

The Hoyt Barnum House: Past & Present

*T*HIS WINTER, city officials announced that they intended to purchase the Hoyt Barnum House at 713 Bedford Street from the Stamford Historical Society and move it to an empty lot adjacent to the Society's present headquarters, the city-owned former Martha Hoyt School on High Ridge Road, just south of the Stamford Museum and Nature Center. This would allow its present .06-acre site to be used to build a new Police Headquarters, replacing the current obsolete and unsafe structure. While the announcement originally caused consternation among preservationists, it soon became evident that, if properly done, the move could prove advantageous for all concerned.

Around 1700, when blacksmith Samuel Hoyt built his modest house, the area was decidedly rural, close to a third of a mile from the center of town. Mr. Hoyt probably chose this out-of-town site because land was cheaper there (too rocky for crops), but also because of the danger of fire the blacksmith's

trade presented in a more settled area. This was also an ideal location for Mr. Hoyt to raise his seven children (two wives). We get an excellent picture of the rural, farming nature of the area when we look at the list of contents of David Barnum's estate

FLASH! The only public hearing on the fate of the Hoyt Barnum house will be held by the Land Use Committee of the Board of Representatives on Tuesday, June 30, 7:30pm, 4th floor of the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard.

after his death in 1838; he was the husband of Betsy Hoyt, a direct descendant of Samuel Hoyt. The detailed inventory (total value: \$3,233.14) puts down such minutiae as "bunch of flax: 75 cents." At the

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

The Hoyt Barnum House: Past & Present

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The Hoyt Barnum Farmhouse at 713 Bedford Street as it appeared c. 1900

time of his death Mr. Barnum owned, among other things, two cows, three calves, two oxen, five swine, thirty fowls, a duck and two geese.

Pam Coleman, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Stamford Historical Society, recently signed a contract with the city, turning over the property with the stipulation that the city pay it \$200,000 in cash plus allow up to \$1,000,000 toward dismantling the building. Some local preservationists, while not thrilled at the prospect of removing Stamford's only remaining 17th-century house from its original site, did not feel they had

much choice. Looking on the bright side, current Stamford Historical Society leadership feels that the new location will allow the Hoyt Barnum House more access to existing facilities as well as a better opportunity to integrate it with the Society's collections and programs. In addition, much better parking will be available at its new home than at its present one.

Our major concern is ensuring the city allows time to properly plan and execute the move, a delicate one requiring a highly experienced contractor to dismantle and re-erect the house on its new site. If done correctly, there is a

chance (albeit small) the building may retain its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, a gateway to state and federal grant money.

If you would like further information regarding the agreement between the Stamford Historical Society and the City of Stamford, as well as copies of the recommendations of the State Historic Preservation Office and our local Historic Preservation Advisory Commission, please follow this link:
<http://hnppinc.org> HNN

Happy Birthday HPAC!

THE CITY'S NEWEST AGENCY, the Historic Preservation Advisory Commission, recently celebrated its first year of life with a full plate of projects. Although only "advisory" (to city agencies and boards) it has managed to assert (or "insert") itself to an unexpected degree in the city's planning process. Unlike most of the Stamford's land-use boards, the eight members of HPAC are mostly professionals in the field: architects, preservationists, community activists and planners, giving their opinions a weight they might otherwise not have.

HPAC "hit the ground running," so to speak, reviewing plans for the Main Post Office site on Atlantic Street, long a subject of concern and contention. With HPAC's assistance, HNP brokered a deal with the developer of the proposed pair of 20-story towers that would include the retention, restoration and reuse of the entire landmark Post Office building, including the 1939 rear annex, previously scheduled for demolition.

And that was only the beginning.

The Hubbard Mansion, at the corner of North Street and Hubbard Avenue, is currently being transformed into a dormitory for foreign students.



The Cedar Heights Bridge, at the corner of Wire Mill Road, is scheduled to be rebuilt with input from the Historic Preservation Advisory Council.

Over the past year, HPAC has reviewed all applications for demolition permits, including those by city departments. They've crossed swords with the CT Department of Transportation over that agency's failure to comply with Federal regulations dealing with historic structures; in this case, railroad and other local bridges.

A few of the other projects HPAC reviewed and commented upon were the conversion of the Second Empire-style Hubbard Mansion on Hubbard

Avenue into a residence hall for foreign students, a two-story addition to the historic cow barn at city-owned Sterling Farms, improvements to the mid-nineteenth-century Romantic-style Woodland Cemetery in the South End, the proposed rehabilitation of the exterior columns of the historic DiMattia (Main) Building of the Ferguson Library, the reuse of the West Main Street lenticular truss bridge, the replacement of the Cedar Heights Road stone arch bridge, the development of interpretive plaques for the former Yale & Towne factory complex in the South End and the fate of the two 19th-century cottages on the Sacred Heart School site. And as if that weren't enough, HPAC also reviewed proposed changes to the city's Demolition Delay process and strengthened preservation elements in the updated Master Plan. Currently on the table is the city's proposal to dismantle and move the 1699 Hoyt Barnum House to a new site in North Stamford, adjacent to the Stamford Historical Society's current headquarters at the former Martha Hoyt School.

We'd like to congratulate HPAC Chairperson Lynn Drobbin and her hardworking board for a job much-needed and well-done. For HPAC's current meeting time and place, follow this link: www.stamfordct.gov/historic-preservation-advisory-commission HNN

PHOTO: JUDY NORINSKY

Summer Street

WHEN STAMFORD was first settled in the mid-1600s, most of the newcomers built their homes and businesses in the area around Atlantic Square. As the population increased, they branched out in all four directions along what were originally Indian paths: east and west on what was to become the Boston Post Road, north on Bedford Street and south toward the many harbors and inlets along Long Island Sound, the main means of transportation in the pre-Industrial period. With the arrival of the railroad in 1848, the town began to grow rapidly, reflecting new prosperity and increased population. One of the first streets to be filled in was Summer Street. The 1879 Hopkins map shows it lined with large Victorian residences up to North Street, with a half dozen or so smaller structures, probably mansard-roofed “cottages” similar to 898 Summer Street presently on the corner of North Street. By the early 20th century, the entire street up to Bull’s Head was filled on both sides with handsome, late-19th-century Queen Anne- and Colonial Revival-style homes occupied by a prosperous middle class.

Nothing is yet known about the first documented occupant of 898 Summer Street, a Mrs. George R. Noyes, but the families who resided there for the next century



898 Summer Street, 1979

were representative of Summer Street, and the house, with its well-preserved formal fireplaces and high ceilings trimmed with molded plaster, still conveys much about their life, tastes and status. By 1889 the house was owned by Edward M. Ayres, owner of the Stamford China Store on Atlantic Square in partnership with his brother Henry (who appears to have lived next door where Planet Pizza is today). The house was next owned by Frank Webster Jerman (1867-1946), owner of the Jerman Shoe Store on Atlantic Street, whose family had been engaged in the early days of shoe manufacturing in North Stamford and New Canaan. Jerman’s extended family included his father-in-law, Edward H. Foster, a civic-minded hardware merchant and pump manufacturer who was involved in establishing public-spirited institutions as Stamford grew from a small town into a city. Members of the Jerman family resided there from 1895 until 1977 (see sidebar).

By the mid-20th century, Summer Street began a noticeable downward slide. Many single-family homes became multi-family dwellings; the area was no longer “fashionable” and houses showed signs of neglect. Porches were

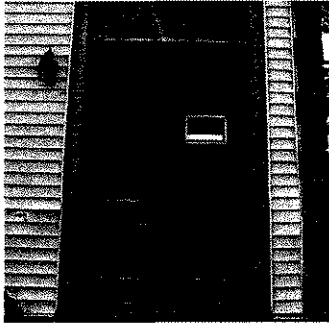
removed or enclosed and artificial siding covered fish scale shingles and patterned siding. With the advent of Ridgeway Shopping Center, once an empty field that housed the circus when it came to town, the decay became more rapid. House after house was demolished for commercial structures above Broad Street. Spacious turn-of-the-century examples were converted to rooming houses or offices above North Street.

However, several well-maintained older houses on the street show potential for restoration and efforts are currently underway to convince the owners of 898 Summer Street, one of the last three survivors of the post-Civil War mansards, to reuse the building in its present form by taking advantage of density and use variances allowed under Section 7.3 of the Stamford Zoning Regulations, the Historic Density Bonus. The owners recently applied for permission to demolish it but were blocked by a request by HNP for a 180-day delay, allowing time to explore alternatives. In the meantime, concerned residents have organized an online petition opposing demolition, which is posted on HNP’s website. HNN

898 Summer Street today



**John Martin,
a native of Stamford,
recently sent us his
reminiscences:**



"When I was growing up in Stamford in the 1960s, my godfather, Halsey Jerman, owned the house at 898 Summer Street. It was already about 100 years old, and had some cool features. The ceilings are very high in every room, and it has two long staircases inside the house. There was a long rope that allowed people on the first floor to ring a bell on the second floor, alerting them that meals were ready. It had a sizeable screened-in front porch that was removed in later years. We would watch parades on Summer Street from that front porch, and take in the excitement across the street at Dairy Queen which always was (and still is) busy on summer nights.

My godfather was concerned about his wife opening the door at night, so he decided to install the ultimate peep holes. I went with him to either Stamford or United Housewrecking and we picked out two hinged brass portholes from an old ship. He cut holes in the twin doors and installed the portholes at eye level. Because of their distinctive look, the doors appear on the poster "Doors of Connecticut" which you can sometimes find at tag sales. Look closely at the doors the next time you pass the house."

Lost



641 Summer Street, 1979



1138 Summer Street, 1979



953 Summer Street (rear), 1979



1163 Summer Street, 1979

And Still Around *(As They Appeared in the 1979 Historic Resources Inventory)*



1887 Summer Street, 1979



Summer Street, corner Forest Lawn Avenue, 1979



979 Summer Street, 1979



Woodland Place, Stamford

Meeting Code Requirements for Porch Rails ...a portfolio of ideas

Main Street, Norwalk



*I*N RESTORING AN OLDER HOUSE, one of the problems you have to deal with is how to meet modern code requirements for porch rails. Pre-code, you could do pretty much what you wanted: short rails, tall rails, even no rails at all. You could use stick balusters, decorative cut-outs, turned posts or classical columns, mostly depending on the style of the house itself.

But today, there are all sorts of safety requirements to deal with and sometimes complying with these requirements will spoil the appearance of an historic porch. We recently conferred with Stamford's former Chief Building Inspector, Anthony Strazza, an expert on code compliance. Mr. Strazza gave us some general guidelines we thought we'd share with you.

First of all, it is important to know how many dwelling units are in the house, as the requirements are different for one- to two-family homes versus multi-family houses, which have much more stringent safety requirements. In one- to two-family homes, railings are not needed at all if the porch floor is less than 30" from the ground, but if required must be at least 36" tall with space between balusters no more than 4" "on center." In multi-family dwellings, the minimum height is 42" with the same space required between balusters (small enough so a child's head could not get caught).

In pre-code days, there was little concern for safety and railings were traditionally lower, sometimes only 24" high. Nobody appeared to worry



Roxbury Corners, Stamford

about heads getting caught. This raises a problem for owners of older houses who would like to keep the historic appearance of their buildings. We've all seen overly tall stick balusters that look awkward and out of place. Mr. Strazza explained that in one- and two-family dwellings, non-conforming porch elements are generally considered "existing conditions" and allowed to stay; however, multi-family residences are inspected by the Fire Marshall's office and they are much stricter about conforming to codes. In the case of an historic home (usually one listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places) an appeal can be made to the State Fire Marshall's Office for a "modification." We recently placed a local mansion that had been converted to apartments on the State Register just in case the owner ran into problems with code compliance and needed to file an appeal. HNN



Henry Street, Stamford

A Bad Solution



The main building at Sterling Farms has one of the least attractive solutions to porch code issues we have ever seen. We'd be happy to help them come up with something better. (It can't be any worse.)



Historic Neighborhood Preservation

An Important Message for Our Readers

Dear Friends,

We are so pleased to be able to send you this Historic Neighborhood Preservation newsletter. HNP has been fighting the battle to save historic buildings, homes and neighborhoods in Stamford for over 35 years. But development in our city has resumed at a place unseen since the days of urban renewal. Our work is needed now more than ever.

Who would have thought that bulldozers would raze the 1770 home of Revolutionary War veteran Andrew Dogherty at 808 High Ridge Road while Stamford slept during the early hours of October 21, 2014?

Yet, despite this loss, we have succeeded in preserving much of what would otherwise have been lost forever. Last year a New York developer announced he would buy and destroy the historic 1916 Post Office at 431 Atlantic Street to make way for a residential/commercial tower. When we learned of the demolition plans, HNP rushed in to oppose it at every turn. We kept fighting before the land use boards and behind the scenes with our elected and appointed officials, getting the word out to the public and press. Our hard work paid off when we came to terms with the developer to save the entire Post Office.

We need your help now more than ever. Please join HNP and help ensure that we can continue to effectively fight to protect the remaining beauty and history of Stamford. We need you and your support to help keep alive our mission, to save irreplaceable landmarks like the downtown Post Office and so much history that still remains in Stamford.

YES, I want to help support the work of Historic Neighborhood Preservation and continue to receive the newsletter. Here's my membership information:

_____ \$40 Friend _____ \$100 Advocate _____ \$500 President's Circle
 _____ \$1,000+ Founder's Circle \$ _____ Other

Matching gifts will increase the value of your contribution. Please check with your employer.

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Please make check payable to Historic Neighborhood Preservation. Contributions to Historic Neighborhood Preservation are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Thank you!

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.

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Comments? Queries? Like to volunteer? Contact
 Wes at 203.325.4278 or execdirect@hnpinc.org

HNP Takes Us Back to World War I Stamford

*A*T THE FERGUSON LIBRARY, on the evening of Wednesday, May 13th, HNP Executive Director Wes Haynes took a few dozen listeners on a “virtual” (no walking) tour of World War I Stamford, talking about the places known to the boys whose names appear on the war memorial in St. John’s Park.

The veterans in the audience, touched by the story, suggested that we reach out to veterans’ organizations in Stamford, offering them the opportunity to hear Mr. Haynes speak. Please contact Wes at execdirect@hnpinc.org if you would like him to address your organization.

One of the high points of his talk came afterward when he was approached by Kathleen Hayes,



Above: A copy of the ancient Greek “Monument to Lysicrates” serves as a war memorial in St. John’s Park.



Far left: Paul Hayes, a Stamford policeman who closely resembles the figure in the doughboy statue in his army uniform.

Left: Early photo of doughboy statue, now in Veterans Park

granddaughter of Paul Hayes, the Stamford resident whose family believed posed for Stamford’s doughboy memorial statue. The statue was created by Steven Augustus Rebeck (1891-1975) of Cleveland, a protégé of noted early-20th-century sculptor Karl Bitter, and was installed in May, 1923, under the auspices of the Citizen’s Honor Roll Committee in Stamford. There are several other copies of the statue in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Missouri and Oklahoma. HNP