



Hartford Preservation Alliance

Property Transfer Paves Way for Preservation of 410 Asylum Street

The unexpected donation of 410 Asylum Street (also known as the Capitol Building) to a nationally-known non-profit agency appears to have successfully prevented the demolition of that historic building. The owner's planned demolition has been blocked since 1999 by a state court injunction. The new owner, Common Ground, intends to rehabilitate the first floor for retail use and to convert the upper floors to 120 efficiency and one-bedroom apartments, many as supportive housing for persons with disabilities.

The Capitol Building, a six-story Neo-Classical Revival office building constructed in 1926, was designed by architect Thomas W. Lamb of New York City, who is famous as the designer of the original Madison Square Garden in New York and of several early 20th century theaters on the National Register. It sits across Asylum Street from the northern end of Bushnell Park and offers commanding views of the State Capitol building. The former owners of the building, Milton and Betty Hollander of Stamford, had been trying to demolish the building so as to create parking for a building they own at 370 Asylum Street

In 1998, the Connecticut Historical Commission successfully petitioned the



410 Asylum Street, also known as the Capitol Building.

Photo: Matt Blood

National Park Service to include the building in a new High Street Historic District and, in conjunction with the Hartford Preservation Alliance and the City of Hartford, sued under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act to prevent demolition of the building. After the Superior Court issued a temporary injunction, the building's owners sought to have the building removed from the National Register, ultimately taking the case to the federal Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York. The listing was upheld by that court in February, and the plaintiffs' request for a permanent injunction against demolition was scheduled to go to trial this November.

continued on page 9

Inside This Issue:

- Asylum Hill Demolition Threats . . .2
- CHC Survives3
- Capewell Project3
- Preservation Week Awards4
- Frog Hollow Walking Tour6
- Membership Report6
- New Board Members7
- Coltsville Developer8
- Frog Hollow Celebration10

City Council Directs City Manager to Prepare a Preservation Ordinance

On October 14, the Hartford City Council unanimously adopted a resolution, which had been submitted by Council member Dr. Robert Painter, requiring the city manager to arrange for the drafting of an ordinance to "preserve our historic past" and "the character of our unique history and its connection to the present." The draft resolution is to be submitted to the Council within 90 days, i.e., by January 12, 2004. The Council resolution comes on the heels of a strong editorial in the *Hartford Courant* calling on the city government to adopt a preservation ordinance similar to the one in Portland, Maine. The Portland ordinance sets design standards for the historic portions of the city and prohibits demolition in those areas except where there is no viable use for the building. It is not clear at this point what preservation requirements the draft ordinance will contain or whether the Council will adopt it. It is expected that the city manager will create a working group to prepare the draft. HPA is expected to be a part of that working group.

HPA Board:

Matt BloodPresident
Lee KuckroVice President
Rafie PodolskySecretary and
Acting Treasurer

Ray Casella Melonaé McLean
Lynn Ferrari Stephanie Woodlock
Bonnie Glasser Everlin Wright
Tony Matta

Contact Information

Mailing Address
P.O. Box 230272
Hartford, CT 06123-0272
Phone
860•246•1067
E-mail
info@hartfordpreservation.org

Editor

Rafie Podolsky

Editorial Assistance

Stephanie Woodlock
Karen O’Maxfield

Articles:

Rafie Podolsky
Lynn Ferrari
Tony Matta
Anne Crofoot Kuckro

Cartoon:

Ken Kahn

Photography:

Matt Blood
Bonnie Glasser

Design and Typography:

Karen O’Maxfield

Management Consultants:

The Parisky Group

Printing courtesy of

Advest Group, Inc.

Mission Statement

*The mission of the
Hartford Preservation Alliance
is to seek to revitalize Hartford and its
neighborhoods
through the preservation and
rehabilitation of Hartford’s unique
architectural heritage.*

Two Asylum Hill Buildings at Risk of Demolition

HPA is working with the Asylum Hill Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) Committee to attempt to prevent the demolition of a building owned by Aetna and a Fraser Place building owned by MassMutual. Both buildings, which date from about 1890, are at risk because of their proximity to major insurance companies. Both are potential sites for expansion of surface parking lots.

47 Sigourney Street

The building at 47 Sigourney, a well-maintained two-story brick structure, sits across the street from Aetna's main national office and just to the south of the Hastings Hotel and Conference Center. It is part of the Imlay-Laurel Street National Register Historic District. It is surrounded by Aetna-owned surface parking.

HPA learned of the potential demolition in June, when Aetna filed a notice of intent to apply for a demolition permit. Aetna also sought a waiver of Hartford's 90-day demolition waiting period. After meetings with HPA and the Asylum Hill NRZ Committee, Aetna withdrew the waiting period waiver request and offered to donate the building to HPA or its designee if it would arrange to move the building off-site. HPA generally opposes the relocation of historic buildings and believes

they should be maintained on their original locations. In this case, however, HPA agreed to support a move to a historically appropriate location, because the buildings which once abutted 47 Sigourney were long ago torn down, leaving little of the historic neighborhood context of which the building was once a part. HPA will continue to oppose demolition.

The relocation of a building — especially a brick building — is very expensive and, in this case, can add \$150,000 or more to the cost of remodeling the building for



47 Sigourney Street, a property owned by Aetna, is currently under the threat of demolition. Photo: Matt Blood

residential use. As it turns out, however, six major Asylum Hill institutions — Aetna, The Hartford, ING, MassMutual, Webster Bank and Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center — have recently joined together to create a new non-profit organization known as NINA — the Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance. It is modeled on SINA (Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance), a consortium of Trinity College, Hartford Hospital and the Institute of Living, which has played a major role in both the development of the Learning Corridor and the rehabilitation of buildings in Frog Hollow. Its new executive director, Ken Johnson, formerly worked for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and played a critical role in neighborhood rehabilitation in Frog Hollow. NINA, with the consent of

continued on page 9

For their accounting assistance, HPA thanks:

Fiondella, Milone & LaSaracina LLP

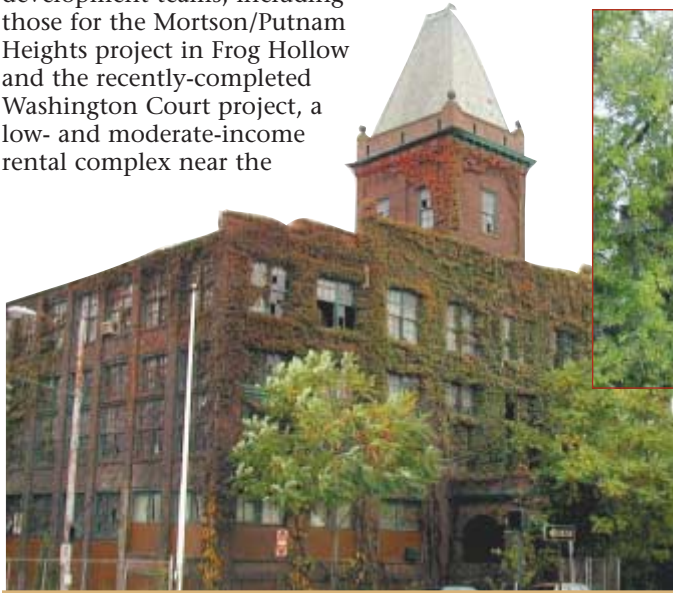
Certified Public Accountants

112 Spencer Street, Manchester CT 06040

(860) 432-3532

Capewell Project Gets New Developer

John Reveruzzi of Enfield and his company, the Milano Corp., have been named the potential developer of the former Capewell Horse Shoe Nail factory on Charter Oak Avenue. Reveruzzi has been part of several rehabilitation development teams, including those for the Mortson/Putnam Heights project in Frog Hollow and the recently-completed Washington Court project, a low- and moderate-income rental complex near the



corner of Washington and Vernon Streets.

The Capewell factory's proximity to Adriaen's Landing and Coltsville has escalated the importance of finding a developer who can actually implement the project. The building has seen a series of developers come and go, but none has been able to put together the necessary financing. Meanwhile, the historic complex has continued to deteriorate. In 2001, it made the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation's list of "most endangered buildings in Connecticut." A year ago, a fire seriously damaged one building in the Capewell complex.



The main three-story building and tower was built in 1900 by Berlin Iron Works, a Connecticut bridge-building company, to replace a previous factory that had been destroyed by fire. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. ❁

The Capewell Building.

Photos: Matt Blood

Connecticut Historical Commission Survives Budget Onslaught

Under the guise of meeting the state's budget crisis, the Connecticut General Assembly in August abolished the Connecticut Historical Commission as an independent entity, but the Commission will survive as a semi-independent board within the state's new arts, culture and tourism commission. The new multi-purpose agency will be known as the Connecticut Commission on Arts, Tourism, Culture, History and Film (CCATCHF). The former Connecticut Historical Commission has been renamed the Historic Preservation Council (HPC) and will function as an advisory board to CCATCHF. The extent to which the state's capacity for architectural preservation has been weakened by this reorganization remains unclear.

The final version of the agency merger was a compromise that maintained more of the Commission's independence than did the original proposal, which was part of the budget which the Governor submitted to the legislature in February. Connecticut Preservation Action and the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation led the statewide effort to preserve the Commission as a strong and independent agency. The Hartford Preservation Alliance testified against merger at the public hearing on the proposal.

The principal compromise incorporated into the statute is that the new Historic Preservation Council is given independent authority, without the approval of CCATCHF, to request the Attorney General to initiate court proceedings under the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act to prevent the demolition of historic and architecturally significant buildings and buildings located in districts that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This provision was viewed as key by preservation advocates. While the new statute transfers substantially all of the other functions of the Commission to CCATCHF, which will have its own executive director, there is some reason to believe that the Commission's staff will continue to report in the first instance to the Historic Preservation Council and that, to a large extent, it will operate post-merger in much the same manner as it operated before. Only time will tell. ❁

Building Advocacy and Public Policy Committee Seeks Members

HPA is preparing to activate its Building Advocacy and Public Policy Committee. The committee's function is to deal with individual buildings under immediate threat of demolition and to advocate for public policies (especially municipal policies) which promote preservation. Individual buildings currently at risk on which HPA is working include 47 Sigourney Street, 34-38 Fraser Place, 64-66 Babcock Street, 410 Asylum Street, the Capewell Building and the former Board of Education building on High Street. Public policy issues currently before HPA include the proposed city council ordinance on architectural preservation and the development of the city's new design center. Individual members of the Building Advocacy and Public Policy Committee will work in subgroups to develop and implement strategies to prevent the demolition of these and other buildings and to address public policy issues, as the need arises. Rafie Podolsky is interim chair of the committee.

If you have interest in being part of the committee, please email Rafie Podolsky at rpodolsky@hartfordpreservation.org or call him at 860-232-7748.

Preservation Week Awards 2003

The third annual Jeffery S. Czopor Preservation Week awards were presented to fifteen honorees in a ceremony on May 13 at the Charter Oak Cultural Center on Charter Oak Avenue in Hartford. The awards acknowledge individuals and organizations whose activities in the past year have made a significant contribution to

historic and architectural preservation. The awards are named for Jeffrey S. Czopor (1973-2001), a young urban planner whose energy and commitment to architectural preservation was an important factor in the creation of HPA. He died of cancer in 2001. The 2003 award winners were:

Photos: Matt Blood

For building rehabilitation:

Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford for the rehabilitation of Park Terrace II in Frog Hollow (Catherine MacKinnon, executive director). The properties are a row of formerly abandoned brick Perfect Sixes, built in 1912, which sit at the eastern edge of Pope Park. MHA transformed the buildings from gutted eyesores into fully occupied rehabilitated buildings which complete the impressive Frog Hollow border of the park. It also built one beautifully-designed infill building which is virtually indistinguishable from its neighboring buildings.



Hartford Children's Theater and architect **Valerio Giadone** for the renovation of a former carriage house into the Carriage House Theater (Linn McGlade, interim executive director; Dulcie Giadone, president of the Board). The building, which is behind 360 Farmington Avenue in Asylum Hill and across from the Mark Twain House, is now an 80-seat theater.

The Institute of Living for the rehabilitation of the White Hall Building on the Institute campus (Dr. Harold I. Schwartz, Psychiatrist-in-Chief of the Institute). The White Hall Building, built in 1877, was designed by George Keller, who also designed the Charter Oak Temple on Charter Oak Avenue and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch in Bushnell Park. The renovation of both the interior and exterior of the building, which had been vacant for some time, was for the purpose of housing the new Olin Neuropsychiatry Research Center, a facility which will provide cutting-edge research on schizophrenia and other neurological-based forms of mental illness.



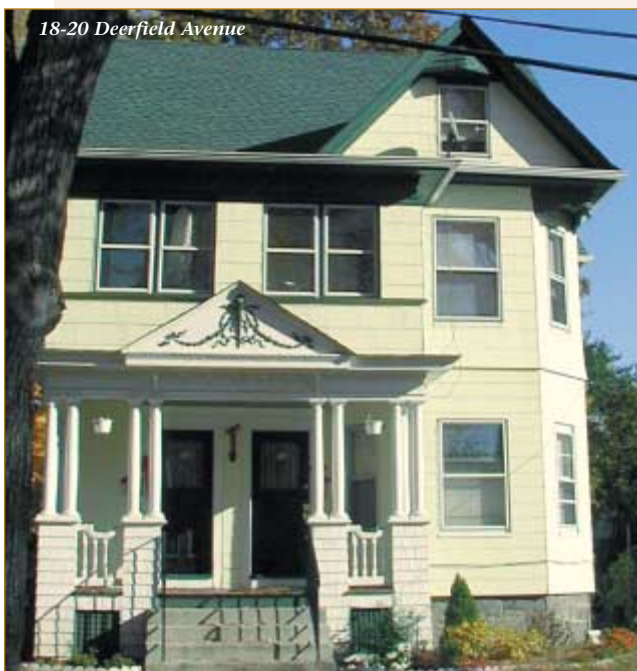
For lifetime achievement:

John Shannahan, State Historic Preservation Officer and former Director of the Connecticut Historical Commission, for his lifetime of commitment to preservation in Connecticut. Mr. Shannahan, who recently retired from the Connecticut Historical Commission after 35 years of service, helped build the Commission into one of the most professional and skilled state commissions in the country. Under his

leadership, the Commission has played an active role in reviewing proposed demolition activity by municipalities and in protecting significant buildings which were under attack. For example, he initiated the legal action that prevented the demolition of 410 Asylum Street and the litigation that, until a fire a year ago, had prevented the demolition of the historic South Green block at Park and Main Streets.



Christian Activities Council for the renovation of 18-20 and 46-48 Deerfield Avenue in Upper Albany (Donald Steinle, executive director). Deerfield is a one-block street which runs from Albany Avenue to Greenfield Street. Its



buildings were constructed between 1900 and 1903 and the block is part of the Upper Albany National Register Historic District. The Council, which has its office on Vine Street in Upper Albany, has been doing both residential and commercial rehabilitation work in the Upper Albany area. In 2001, it received a Preservation Week award for the construction of Zezzo House on Homestead Avenue.

960 Main LLC and **Jeter Cook & Jepsen Architects, Inc.** for the renovation of the former G Fox & Co. building. The building, designed by Cass Gilbert of New York, was constructed in 1917-1918. The stainless steel marquee, display windows, entrance and first floor elevators date from the 1934-1935 renovation of the building by the Chicago firm of Taussig-Flesch & Associates. The Art Deco style of the building, which provides the building's distinctive character, has been carefully preserved in the renovation, which is one of the Six Pillars in the revitalization of downtown Hartford. The principal tenant is Capital Community College (formerly Greater Hartford Community College), and the State of Connecticut played a major role in generating the funding which made the rehabilitation possible. The project also made extensive use of federal historic tax credits.



Awards continued on page 7

Frog Hollow Walking Tour

Highlights Area's Historic Treasures

By Tony Matta

On Saturday, October 4, Hartford Preservation Alliance President, Matt Blood, led a group of about 50 historic explorers on a tour of Hartford's Frog Hollow neighborhood. This event was featured as one of the many Rediscover Hartford activities that occurred throughout the city. The day was cloudy but the rains held off until the tour ended. The participants, who came from many different parts of the Hartford region, were given a captivating and informative 2½ hour tour of this well-preserved 19th century urban environment.

The tour began with the monumental civic and arts buildings along Capitol Avenue and Washington Street. These included the State Capitol, the State Library, the State Office Building, the State Armory and the Bushnell Theater. These buildings replaced earlier factory buildings similar to those along Capitol Avenue west of Flower Street, which are currently used as office space. Matt shared some of the wonderful historical details for these buildings. For example, the design of the State Capitol was based on a competition that was won by the architect Richard Upjohn. His design featured a clock tower; but that tower was later changed to the present great domed tower because the contractor, James G. Batterson, founder of the Travelers Insurance Company, was a stone builder and wanted to utilize

more stonework in the construction of the capitol.

The tour then turned inward to the residential areas along Hungerford Street, which features single and multifamily homes built with care and having exquisite masonry and wood detailing. These houses are examples of early factory worker housing from around 1870. The tour turned down Russ Street to look at the magnificent 1871 DeWitt Perry House, one of the few remaining Second Empire-style buildings in the area. Upon reaching Grand Street, Matt highlighted the 1897 Cohen Block as an example of what was once a myriad of neighborhood stores scattered throughout the Frog Hollow area serving factory workers and residents. At the corner of Broad and Russ Streets, the tour admired the masonry detailing of the 1900 Swedish Bethel Baptist Church. Like many of Frog Hollow's historic churches, this church created a center and neighborhood for immigrant factory workers that lived nearby. It also exhibits construction details typical of many other buildings, including the 1893 Billings & Spencer Company (also known as Billings Forge) on the corner of Russ and Lawrence Streets.

The tour continued along Babcock Street, where the buildings, most of which were built about 1890, feature decorative porches with the elaborate ornament typical of the Queen Anne style. As with many other buildings in



HPA President Matt Blood speaks to Frog Hollow tour participants on a stop along Hungerford Street. Photo: Bonnie Glasser

Frog Hollow, these two- and three-family structures were built as apartments for factory workers. As the tour continued, more examples were found of missing or deteriorated residential buildings. On Park Street, the tour admired the architecture of the 1924 Saint Anne's Roman Catholic Church and the 1884 George Keller-designed original Watkinson School on the corner of Park and Putnam Streets. The tour progressed down Putnam Heights where many of the existing housing units are decayed and currently being renovated. On Morton Street, the tour was captivated by the historically-renovated and recently sold beautiful housing units. Matt shared with the tour some of the intricate details of the financing necessary to renovate these structures. The missing spaces have been filled with new housing units that are in character with the older historic buildings.

The tour traveled along Park Terrace where it was treated to the captivating view of the 1895 Park Terrace houses,

continued on page 8

Two Hundred Members — and Growing!

The Hartford Preservation Alliance is undertaking a membership development campaign to help raise awareness about the importance of historic architectural preservation and to build the organization's capacity to continue this important work.

You might have been the recipient of one of our membership solicitation letters. We are working with several organizations, including the Connecticut Trust, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, neighborhood civic associations and others to find people who care about Hartford's unique history and architecture and are willing to join in the Alliance's efforts to preserve it.

Perhaps you received an invitation to meet with representatives of the Alliance at a neighborhood coffee. We have had several such events, hosted at private homes, where people can meet, talk about preservation initiatives and learn

more about the Alliance. We'll be hosting more of these, so if you would like an invitation to the next one, contact Sandy Parisky of The Parisky Group at (860) 232-0641.

Were you were contacted by an enthusiastic Alliance Board member during our recent membership phone-a-thon? If you received a call and a follow-up membership application in the mail, please take a moment to fill it out and return it with your membership contribution. Or use the application form enclosed in this newsletter. We'd love to welcome you to our membership roster!

We welcome your suggestions for strengthening preservation efforts in Hartford and would be happy to discuss our initiatives with you. Drop us a line c/o The Parisky Group, 30 Arbor Street, Hartford, CT 06106, or call Alliance president Matt Blood at (860) 246-1067. 🌿

Four New Members Join HPA Board

The Hartford Preservation Alliance is seeking to strengthen its Board of Directors as it moves forward with initiatives to promote the revitalization of Hartford through the preservation and rehabilitation of Hartford's unique architecture. We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the HPA Board:



Ray Casella is an attorney with the law firm of Shipman & Goodwin LLP in its tax department, where one of his specialties is establishing and working with tax-exempt, non-profit organizations. Ray has degrees in law, accounting and management. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have lived in Connecticut for eight years and are building a new home in Suffield.

Casella

Lynn Ferrari has lived in the Nathaniel Shipman house, a restored Victorian on Charter Oak Place, for 20 of the 27 years she has been a resident of Hartford. She works for Phoenix Investment Partners, is a past board member of the Coalition to Strengthen the Sheldon /Charter Oak Neighborhood (CSSCON), and heads that organization's Charter Oak Park Committee.



Ferrari



Melonaé McLean moved to Hartford from New York City with her family in 1970. She is Marketing/Communications Coordinator at the Artists Collective in Hartford. Previously, she had an extensive 20-year career in radio. Ms. McLean returned to Hartford six years ago and now lives in a turn-of-the-century home in South

Windsor. She has been active in the Christian Activities Council's efforts to restore the statuary at the corner of Deerfield and Albany Avenue.

McLean

Tony Matta is an architect with over 25 years of experience in restoration and reuse of public and private properties and historic landmarks. He works in the Facilities Division of the City of Hartford's Department of Public Works. He previously worked on the restoration of the Old State House and on other historic properties when he was employed by Smith/Edwards Architects. Mr. Matta presently lives in East Hartford.



Matta

Awards Continued from Page 5

For community education:

Elizabeth Normen for the creation of the *Hog River Journal*. The Hog River is the historic name of the Park River, which runs from the western part of Hartford through downtown to the Connecticut River at Dutch Point. The *Journal*, whose first issue came out in the fall of 2002, describes itself as "the region's magazine of history, culture and the arts." It is published by the Hartford Public Library.

Karen O'Maxfield for her website, "Hartford, Connecticut: Landmarks ~ History ~ Neighborhoods." The website is located at <http://hartford.omaxfield.com>. O'Maxfield describes the website as "a photographic survey of the places, architecture and people which make Hartford a special place." Since 1996, she has operated Studio O'Maxfield, which provides photographic and graphic design services.

Kevin Flood for his website, "Hartford History." The website, found at <http://www.hartfordhistory.net>, includes photographs, news, event calendars and an extensive set of trivia questions on Hartford history and architecture. Flood, a former newspaper reporter and editor, is currently an editor of websites.

Andy Hart, general manager of the *Hartford News*, for his articles and photographs on preservation and preservation issues. The *Hartford News* is a weekly newspaper with a circulation of about 15,000. Hart has written numerous articles about preservation issues in the city and has played a critical role in the *Hartford News'* continuing regular publication of Tony DeBonee's pictures of historic Hartford.

Antiquarian and Landmarks Society for its Collectors & Explorers lecture series (Bill Hosley, executive director). The series, now in its sixth year, has developed more than 40 hours of new and original Connecticut heritage programming, including such diverse topics as "The Heritage City: Rediscovering Hartford's Treasures," industrial Connecticut, painted interiors and the pioneering role of the DAR as preservationists.

Leadership Greater Hartford for its guide booklet, *Hartford's Neighborhoods and Treasures*. Since 1977, more than 2,600 Connecticut residents have gone through LGH's leadership training and networking programs. The guidebook, published in 2002, outlines self-guided historic and cultural tours of downtown and of the south, north and central/west neighborhoods.

Ernest R. Shaw for his Heritage Trails Sightseeing Tours. Mr. Shaw has been conducting tours for the past 20 years. His tours currently include "Hartford - City of Heritage," "Secrets of Mark Twain's Victorian Hartford," and "Samuel Colt, Genius of Hartford." Shaw also provides other historic tours in the Hartford area.

West End Civic Association Architectural Resources Committee for on-going preservation efforts in the West End of Hartford (Mary Pelletier, committee chair). The West End, a turn-of-the-century Victorian neighborhood, has seen a steady stream of house fix-ups and repaintings, many very Victorian in tone. The Committee's efforts have included neighborhood architectural literature and walking tours. 🌸

Coltville National Park Proposal Moves Forward

By Anne Crofoot Kuckro



The Colt Building, with its landmark blue onion dome.

Photo: Matt Blood

Congress has approved, and President Bush has just signed, a bill directing the National Park Service to determine Coltville's eligibility for inclusion in the National Park system. Connecticut's congressional delegation, Senators Christopher J. Dodd and Joseph I. Lieberman and Representative John Larsen, are to be congratulated for achieving this important first step. They will now have to convince Congress to fund the Park Service's study of Coltville's historic significance.

There is more than enough documentation of Coltville's historical significance not only to Hartford but also to Connecticut and the nation. The Colt Armory did more than produce the guns that helped preserve the Union and win the West. It also introduced such innovative production concepts as interchangeable parts and the assembly line and served as the training ground for a number of Connecticut's inventors and entrepreneurs, such as Pratt, Whitney, Billings, Spencer and Gatling.

This complex, which Samuel Colt built during the 1850s and which his wife and widow Elizabeth Hart Colt rebuilt and added to during the 1860s and 1890s, includes the Colt factory, two types of worker housing, the Church of the Good Shepherd and the Colt Memorial. Despite years of neglect, these solid structures have survived. Now, a private developer is prepared to invest \$110 million to renovate the complex.

Homes for America Holdings, Inc., is not waiting for Congress to fund the National Park Service study. Plans for the Colt Gateway project call for new or refurbished commercial, office and residential space. The developers are building to National Park standards and will reserve about 100,000 square feet of space that could accommodate a museum or federal park facilities, similar to those in Lowell, Massachusetts. Both the Connecticut History Museum in the State Library and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art have significant collections of Colt's guns and other memorabilia, much of it in storage. These collections could provide the basis for a museum of Connecticut Science and Industry housed in the Armory, which played such a significant part in the nation's industrial revolution.

It is evident from the piles of earth behind the fence on Huyshope Avenue that environmental remediation work has already begun. At the north end of the complex, a recently cleaned yellow brick smoke stack rises above a cream building with sparkling new windows. It is a promising sign that the Colt complex is beginning to emerge from its cocoon of accumulated grime. Crowned with its distinctive star-studded blue onion dome, the Colt Gateway project will provide travelers on Interstate 91 with dramatic evidence of Hartford's renaissance. ✿

Walking Tour *Continued from Page 6*

also designed by George Keller. These row buildings feature simple entry porches that are punctuated by Queen Anne-style towers at the corner and center points. Matt shared with us the historical tidbit that Keller received the southernmost house of this row as his fee for designing the Park Terrace row. He spent the rest of his life in this house. The tour ended at the Columbia Street cul-de-sac, a spectacular one-block street with row houses on both sides, designed by Keller and built in 1888 and 1889. These houses are each individually owned and restored. The street is a testimony to the vibrant character and historic detailing that is the predominant feature of the Frog Hollow neighborhood. ✿



Original Cartoon: Courtesy of Ken Kahn

Demolition *Continued from Page 2*

Aetna, has agreed to attempt to package sufficient funds to move the Sigourney Street building to a site on Ashley Street. Aetna has temporarily delayed demolition to give NINA time to find financing, although it has taken out a demolition permit so as to allow itself to act quickly if NINA also does not find funding.

The demolition proposal, like the plan to demolish 410 Asylum Street, illustrates the conflict between historic preservation and surface parking. The parking-related irony which surrounds Aetna's proposal is threefold. First, demolition of 47 Sigourney would make only a tiny dent in Aetna's parking needs — Aetna actually wants to create well over 1,000 new parking spaces for its employees. Second, the building is located at the very corner that will become a stop on the Hartford-New Britain busway, which is intended to provide alternatives to automobile commuting and to reduce the need for surface parking. Third, that corner is also the current site of an Aetna parking garage, which, because of its age, is likely to be rebuilt within the next few years. The parking problem over which this building may be lost will necessarily have to be solved by other means anyway, without regard to whether 47 Sigourney Street survives.

34-38 Fraser Place

Meanwhile, MassMutual, with offices in another part of Asylum Hill, is seriously considering the demolition of an extraordinary three-unit row house on Fraser Place. Two years ago, MassMutual, over the opposition of HPA and the Asylum Hill NRZ Committee, demolished six turn-of-the-century three-family buildings on that street so that it could create a large employee parking lot. It has now acquired the residential building adjacent to that parking lot and is considering what to do with the site.

This 1890 brick building at 34-38 Fraser Place is one of a small number of Hartford row houses which still remain and, it is believed, the only such building in Asylum Hill. Because it sits on the edge of a very steep hill, the main entrances on Fraser Place are really the second floor rather than the first floor and the individual units are really four stories high. The upper back porches offer a spectacular view of downtown Hartford and the interiors retain fireplaces, unusual banisters and spindles and other original features. The building is suitable for conversion into three owner-occupied town houses and could provide desirable housing within easy walking distance of downtown.

At this point, MassMutual maintains that it has made no decision as to how to proceed. No notice of intent to demolish has been filed; but MassMutual has also not been willing to give up control of the building so that it can be redeveloped and resold. The long-term fate of the building is thus very much uncertain. 🌿



Left: The main entrance retains much of its original character.

Below: Detail of original floor-to-ceiling bannister spindles that are still intact.

Photos: Matt Blood



410 Asylum *Continued from Page 1*

The Hollanders, however, unexpectedly donated the building to Common Ground, which has renovated three large buildings in New York City, including the Times Square Hotel. Common Ground's buildings are used to create housing in which support services are provided on-site to help stabilize the lives of low-income individuals. Its model typically involves the creation of efficiency and one-bedroom apartments, about half of which are reserved for persons needing support services, while the remaining

apartments are rented to other low-income workers.

The national director of Common Ground is Rosanne Haggerty, who is originally from West Hartford and who retains strong ties to the Hartford area.

The donation of the building has created its own controversy with the city. Some city leaders had hoped to have the site used for upscale downtown housing. There have been suggestions that the city government may not endorse Common Ground's applications for subsidies from state or

federal housing agencies, which will be key to funding the rehabilitation.

Others, however, including the *Hartford Courant's* editorial board, have praised Common Ground as a desirable redeveloper for the building.

As a party to the litigation, the Hartford Preservation Alliance remains directly involved in the fate of the building. HPA is being represented pro bono by Attorney Elizabeth Smith of Tyler, Cooper & Alcorn. 🌿

Frog Hollow South Celebrates

Addition to National Register



This 1875 Second-Empire home at 40 Allen Place is one of the buildings in the new Allen Place-Lincoln Street Historic District.
Photo: Matt Blood

In a collaboration between HPA and the Frog Hollow South Neighborhood Revitalization Zone Committee, a new Allen Place-Lincoln Street Historic District has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. The district is immediately south of the existing Frog Hollow Historic District and includes Allen Place, Lincoln Street and Vernon Street between Washington and Affleck Streets. The district, which was built up primarily between 1890 and 1910, is characterized by a mixture of two- and three-story brick and wood frame buildings in a variety of Queen Anne building styles.

As part of the collaboration, HPA and the NRZ Committee have jointly selected ten buildings in the district to receive National Register display plaques. A public celebration to award the plaques was held on November 8.

The National Register application was prepared by architectural historian David Ransom and was funded through a grant to HPA by the Ensworth Charitable Foundation.



Hartford
Preservation Alliance
P.O. Box 230272
Hartford, CT 06123-0272

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD, CT
PERMIT NO. 1754