

# THE NEW HAVEN PRESERVATION TRUST

*Since 1961, an independent voice preserving New Haven's architectural heritage, the foundation for great neighborhoods.*

## NEWS & VIEWS



Vol. IX, No. 1

March 2008

### SHOULD YALE'S NEW SCHOOL OF ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT REPLACE TWO IMPORTANT WHITNEY AVENUE BUILDINGS?

*While waiting for Norman Foster's design for Yale University's new School of Organization and Management (SOM) to be unveiled, let us take this opportunity to reflect on the many preservation issues that the project has raised.*

By Chris Wigren

The School of Organization and Management currently occupies several mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century villas on Hillhouse Avenue, a setting that perhaps reflected—and even nourished—its persona as a nontraditional business school with special interest in non-profit organizations. Under President Richard Levin and new Dean Joel M. Podolny, however, SOM has been reinventing itself along the lines of more traditional business school models, and with its new identity has come the desire to be relocated in more modern architectural structures to reflect this change.

The new site is planned for an area across from the Peabody Museum on Whitney Avenue, at the very edge of campus. This remote location resembles that of Harvard University's Busi-

ness School, which is on the other side of the Charles River and away from that university's central campus.

#### ARCHITECTURE

But two buildings currently occupy the site planned for SOM, both of which were originally constructed for the Security Insurance Company in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The older of these, located at 175 Whitney Avenue, was built in 1924 to designs by Henry Killam Murphy, an architect with ties to Yale. Murphy, either on his own or in partnership with Richard Henry Dana, designed the Yale Hope Mission on Crown Street and numerous New Haven houses, as well as the Yale-China Association's campus in Changsha. His papers can be found at Yale's Sterling Memorial Library.

As the first commercial intrusion into what was then an upper-class residential neighborhood, Murphy's building sought to fit in by imitating its neighbors' scale and sense of style. Accordingly, it is compact, and set well back from the street in a grassy lawn dotted with shade trees. The building's Adamesque style is not common in the immediate neighborhood, but its massing and setting, along with the level and quality of its detail and overall sense of understated elegance, clearly were meant to put the concern of the neighbors to rest.

The building is a simple block of soft-colored brick, lavishly trimmed in stone. Circular forms are one theme in the design: first-floor windows set in blind arches build up to a bigger arch at

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Above left: 175 Whitney Avenue; Above right: 155 Whitney Avenue

# 155 and 175 Whitney Avenue to be demolished

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the main door, two stories tall and recessed to make it clear that this is where one enters the building. The recess also gives us a hint from the outside of what will become visible on the inside: an exquisite circular lobby, two stories high, ringed by slender columns supporting a balcony, and lit by a circular skylight.

Thirty-odd years later, in 1954, the Security Insurance Company expanded with a new wing (really a separate building) designed by New Haven's then-largest architectural firm, the office of Douglas Orr. Actually, only part of Orr's design was constructed—three of a planned eight stories—which gives the building a rather uncomfortable, cut-off appearance. But it sits even farther back from the street than Murphy's building, deferring to it and continuing to respect the streetscape of lawns and shade trees.

Clearly #175 is a gem, and it would be relatively easy for SOM to retain the front half of Murphy's original build-

ing, including the façade, side walls, and the rotunda inside, as part of the new school. The rest of the interior either has been altered or never had much character to begin with and could be remodeled to suit SOM's needs.

But would Norman Foster do that? His international reputation to date has been built on his strictly modernist design. However, he has demonstrated

appeal—and is most missed when it is not followed. Further up the street, one notes how apartment buildings were inserted into the streetscape in the 1920s and '30s. Most are broken down into u-shaped structures that, from an angle, read as two smaller buildings rather than one large one, thus maintaining the rhythm and scale of the street.

Attention to size and scale is especially



Right: Entryway of 175 Whitney Avenue; Above: Detail of 175 Whitney Avenue's concave entry niche; the ceiling's decorative components include a swag border at the base, a grid of octagonal coffers with rosettes and a cluster of narrow feather-like carvings pointing down from the peak.



that when the client so wishes, he can work with existing historic buildings and settings, and with considerable sensitivity. Examples include the British Museum in London, the Reichstag in Berlin, and particularly the Carrée d'Art, an arts center in Nîmes, France. Located next to the famed Maison Carrée, the latter building is constructed of steel and glass, but its delicate design is perfectly in scale with the 2,000-year-old temple. In the end, whatever Yale builds, the Security buildings can offer pointers as to how to make the SOM building fit happily into its neighborhood.

**Size and scale.** The processional sense of buildings of a certain size and scale is what gives Whitney Avenue its

important at the edges of the campus, where Yale's institutional buildings adjoin residential neighborhoods. The edges of the campus should blend into the surrounding neighborhoods and provide a gentle transition from the big institutional scale of the university to the smaller scale of the city. This would also serve as a visible symbol of Yale's active participation in the life of New Haven, rather than identifying it as something alien and set apart from the rest of the city. Yale's new sculpture building does this to some degree, by putting the newer structures at the cen-

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## “THE GREENEST BUILDING IS ONE THAT ALREADY EXISTS”

“Yale University has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 17% since committing to a steep reduction in 2005, President Richard C. Levin reported today in a speech at the University of Copenhagen,” proclaims a Yale University press release of January 21, 2008 announcing Yale’s leadership in campus sustainability. The press release continues, “Levin’s speech, *“Leading by Example: Creating a Sustainable Campus,”* is the first of a series of lectures on climate change sponsored by the University of Copenhagen as a prelude to the United Nations’ climate summit in Denmark in 2009.”

~\*~

*The following speech (excerpted) was delivered by Richard Moe, President of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. on the occasion of receiving the Vincent Scully Prize on December 13, 2007.*

“... I am especially honored to have this prize awarded by Vince Scully. He is a hero of mine, as he is to so many of you, and to so many others who appreciate great design and great architecture. I don’t know of anyone who has done more to foster a better understanding and appreciation of all aspects of our built environment, or who has inspired more students to pursue excellence in improving that environment. Vince is a Trustee Emeritus of the National Trust and ... I will be ever proud of this award which bears his name.

When you strip away the rhetoric, preservation is simply having the good sense to hold on to things that are well designed, that link us with our past in a meaningful way, and that have plenty of good use left in them.

Because it necessarily involves the conservation of energy and natural resources, historic preservation has always been the greenest of the building arts...It’s all about sustainability.

The United States is a big part of the problem. We have only 5% of the world’s population, but we’re responsible for 22% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions that are the leading cause of climate change. Much of the debate on this subject usually focuses on the need to reduce auto emissions. But according to the EPA, transportation—cars, trucks, trains, airplanes—accounts for just 27% of America’s greenhouse gas emissions, while 48%—almost twice as much—is produced by the construction and operation of buildings. If you remember nothing else I say tonight, remember this: Nearly half of the greenhouse gases we Americans send into the atmosphere comes from our buildings. In fact, more than 10% of the entire world’s greenhouse gas emissions is produced by

America’s buildings—but the current debate on climate change does not come close to reflecting that huge fact. The message is clear: Any solution to climate change must address the need to reduce emissions by being smarter about how we use our buildings and wiser about land use.

The retention and reuse of older buildings is an effective tool for the responsible, sustainable stewardship of our environmental resources—including those that have already been expended. I’m talking about what’s called “embodied energy.”

Here’s the concept in a nutshell: Buildings are vast repositories of energy. It takes energy to manufacture or extract building materials, more energy to transport them to a construction site, still more energy to assemble them into a building. All of that energy is embodied in the finished structure—and if the structure is demolished and landfilled, the energy

locked up in it is totally wasted. What’s more, the process of demolition itself uses more energy—and, of course, the construction of a new building in its place uses more yet.

Let me give you some numbers that will translate that concept into reality.

- According to a formula produced for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, about 80 billion BTUs of energy are embodied in a typical 50,000-square-foot commercial building. That’s the equivalent of 640,000 gallons of gasoline. If you tear the building down, all of that embodied energy is wasted.

- What’s more, demolishing that same 50,000-square-foot commercial building would create nearly 4,000 tons of waste. That’s enough debris to fill 26 railroad boxcars—that’s a train nearly a quarter of a mile long, headed for a landfill that is already almost full.

- Once the old building is gone, putting up a new one in its place takes more energy, of course, and it also uses more natural resources and releases new pollutants and greenhouse gases into our environment. Look at all the construction cranes dotting the Washington skyline, and consider this: It is estimated that constructing a new 50,000-square-foot commercial building releases about the same amount of carbon into the atmosphere as driving a car 2.8 million miles.

One more point: Since 70% of the energy consumed over a building’s lifetime is used in the operation of the building, some people argue that all the energy used in demolishing an older building and replacing it is quickly recovered through

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- Richard Moe,  
President,  
National Trust for Historic Preservation

### “THE GREENEST BUILDING IS ONE THAT ALREADY EXISTS”

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the increased energy efficiency of the new building—but that’s simply not true. Recent research indicates that even if 40% of the materials are recycled, it takes approximately 65 years for a green, energy-efficient new office building to recover the energy lost in demolishing an existing building. And let’s face it: Most new buildings aren’t designed to last anywhere near 65 years.

Despite these surprising statistics and many more like them, we persist in thinking of our buildings as a disposable—rather than a renewable—resource.

A report from the Brookings Institution projects that by 2030 we will have demolished and replaced 82 billion square feet of our current building stock, or nearly 1/3 of our existing buildings, largely because the vast majority of them weren’t designed and built to last any longer.

That much demolition will create a lot of debris. If we didn’t recycle any of the building materials, we’d be left with 5.5 billion tons of waste. That’s enough debris to fill almost 2,500 NFL stadiums.

How much energy will it take to demolish and replace those buildings? Enough to power the entire state of California—the 10th largest economy in the world—for 10 years. On the other

hand, if we were to rehab just 10% of these buildings, we would save enough energy to power the State of New York for well over a year.

It all comes down to this simple fact: We can’t build our way out of the global warming crisis. We have to conserve our way out. That means we have to make better, wiser use of what we’ve already built.

Anthropologist Ashley Montague has said that the secret to staying young is to die young—but the trick is to do it as late as possible. All over the United States, people are showing that old buildings put to new uses can stay young to a ripe old age. If that’s not sustainability, I don’t know what else to call it.

Still, too many people just don’t see the connection. They don’t yet understand that preservation must be an integral part of any effort to encourage environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

Here’s what we have to keep in mind: No matter how much green technology is employed in its design and construction, any new building represents a new impact on the environment.

The bottom line is that the greenest building is one that already exists.”

### Planned Teardown of Whitney Avenue Historic Buildings

*continued from page 2*

ter of the block and allowing the smaller-scale, older ones to remain around the perimeter. The largest portion faces Howe Street (where there already were more modern large apartment houses), although having the parking garage face onto the street was a somewhat unfriendly gesture. A small and well-detailed gallery structure opens onto Edgewood Avenue.

**Landscape.** The setback and landscape of freestanding buildings with lawns and shade trees should be maintained. In addition to the Security Insurance buildings, this has been done

next door at the Christ Presbyterian Church (although the design of the church addition overwhelms the original house), and across the street at the Peabody Museum. An example of what not to do can be seen at the Have-meyer house, which was moved from Grove Street to 31 Whitney Avenue in the 1970s. Without its original lawn and shade trees, the house lost much of its character.

**Style.** The Security Insurance buildings demonstrate that it isn’t necessary to imitate the architectural style of adjoining buildings in order to fit in with them. It is far more important to respect the size and scale of the surroundings, as well as the quality of materials and detailing—or what might be called the “architectural tone.”

### PROCESS AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The SOM situation illustrates what has become Yale’s default mode in major projects, which is not to bother with preserving or reusing existing buildings. All other things being equal, the University’s clear preference is for new construction on a cleared site. In fact, the University has no historic preservation policy; when the *Framework for Campus Planning* was released in 2000, the planned preservation section had not been written. What has emerged instead appears to be an ad hoc preservation policy that focuses almost solely on buildings that Yale has built for itself, with a few exceptions, such as the houses on Hillhouse Avenue.

Yale’s engaging in regular conversations with the New Haven Preservation Trust could help to make up for this omission, but the university does not



Above: 175 Whitney Avenue interior rotunda

take advantage of that opportunity. Instead, it chooses to treat such meetings as face-to-face press releases in which university officials tell Trust representatives of planned projects without seeking any informed input. For instance, Trust representatives mentioned the value of the Security Insurance buildings some time ago, but university officials put off any further discussion of the matter. Unfortunately, this is typical of the Trust's interactions with Yale about preservation concerns: it's always too early to talk about them—until it's too late.

### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

These points are well worth thinking about, because Yale will continue to build in the near future. The next big project with preservation implications will probably be two new residential colleges currently under consideration for a site at Prospect and Schem Streets. A number of buildings on that site would lend themselves to reuse, both for their historic and architectural merit and in the name of environmental responsibility. For instance, there are two houses, one at each end of the site, that could become master's houses:

88 Prospect Street (ca. 1830) is a vernacular Greek Revival house, possibly related to the Farmington Canal, while the Daniel Cady Eaton house (ca. 1865, Perkins, Chatfield & Co., builders), constructed for a prominent professor of botany, is a handsome Gothic Revival structure of brick. In addition, there is Hammond Hall (1904, W. Gedney Beatty), an engineering building that is currently used as sculpture studios (but soon will be vacated), which contains a magnificent open space capable of being reconfigured for a wide range of uses. There is also Brewster Hall (1907), a former dormitory that could become a dormitory again. Also currently on the site is Donaldson Commons (1979, Herbert S. Newman Associates), a dining hall with a variety of seating areas in intimate nooks and screened rooms and open spaces, facing a peaceful courtyard. One of Yale's most inviting modern spaces, Donaldson is already a second-generation adaptive use project—a reconfiguration of the former Berkeley Divinity School Chapel that was originally a carriage house. Adding yet another generation to this story and weaving Donaldson, along with other older buildings, into the new colleges would create a setting characterized by both history and innovation, with layers of richness that no all-new construction could ever hope to achieve.

The New Haven Preservation Trust calls upon Yale to give *serious* consideration to reusing existing structures for both the new SOM building and the new residential colleges, in much the same spirit as was demonstrated in the Saybrook/Branford Colleges (which reused Memorial Quadrangle) and Silliman College (which incorporated older Scientific School buildings). To do so would reflect Yale's intention to conserve resources and live modestly on the earth, as well as express its concern for retaining these valuable reminders of New Haven's history.

## Lintels & Sills: Preservation News and Updates

### STATE AWARD AIDS RESTORATION OF EAST ROCK ICON

The City of New Haven will receive \$200,000 from the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism's Historic Restoration Fund Grant Program. The money will be used to



repair the interior staircase and observation deck at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument on East Rock, which will eventually be opened up to the public. Plaques and sculptures inside the monument will also be restored, and a new entry door and gate installed.

As reported by Elizabeth Benton in the February 12, 2008 edition of the New Haven Register, "the monument has undergone a major face-lift recently, most notably restoration of the Angel of Peace statue atop the monument." The work could be observed by residents and visitors to the city, since most of it took place on the New Haven Green. In November 2007, the statue was returned to its original site. "The entire restoration is expected to cost \$1 million."

### JOIN THE NEW HAVEN PRESERVATION TRUST!

May is Preservation Month and time for your annual NHPT membership renewal. Watch for renewal notices in your mail soon.



## Homeowner's Corner Workshops: “(Re)Searching Your Home’s History”

*Have you ever wanted to know more about your old house, but didn't have a clue where to start?*

“(Re)Searching Your Home’s History,” a two-part workshop for homeowners, will provide a framework for conducting historical research, along with a forum for asking questions. Sponsored by the Fair Haven Branch of the New Haven Free Public Library, the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and the New Haven Preservation Trust, the first session will be held at the library on Saturday morning, April 5, between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm. Leah S. Glaser, Assistant Professor of History at Central Connecticut State University who teaches their historic preservation courses, will explore a variety of local

archival sources available to homeowners, and respond to such common “old-house” questions as: Who built my house? What did they do in the community? What architectural style is it? What significant changes have been made to the structure since it was built? Participants are urged to bring whatever background information they have already assembled on the history of their houses, as well as exterior and interior photographs. Attendees are encouraged to follow research leads offered at the first workshop, and to subsequently share their findings at the second library workshop to be held on Saturday morning, May 17, between 10:00 am and 12:00 pm. Historian Kate Ohno and local architect Colin Caplan will join John Herzan, Preservation Services Officer for the New Haven Preservation Trust, to review what homeowners have discovered, and to suggest additional avenues for historical and architectural research.

**Workshop Part 1**  
**Saturday, April 5**  
**10:00 am – noon**

**Workshop Part 2**  
**Saturday, May 17**  
**10:00 am – noon**

**FREE and open**  
**to the Public**

**Call the**  
**Fair Haven Branch of**  
**the New Haven Free**  
**Public Library**  
**946-8115**  
**to reserve a spot!**

## Lintels & Sills: Preservation News and Updates

### Help Save the Forbes Diner

The 1957 Fodero classic stainless-steel diner, formerly a city icon on Forbes Avenue needs, a new home. Owner Helmi Elsayed “Mo” Ali is working hard to save it. Richard J. S. Gutman, author of *American Diner: Then and Now*, called the model used for the Forbes “just about the zenith of diner design.... It sort of just epitomizes the 1950’s.” Last month, Ali moved the diner from its site in the shadow of the massive Quinnipiac River Bridge expansion to a storage area behind his other classic—The New Star Diner—in

Fair Haven. The diner is in pieces, on flatbed trailers, and it can’t stay there for long. Recently quoted in the New Haven Register, Ali says, “I need help—I need a new home right away!” He adds that The Forbes “is in very good shape—inside and out. All you need is a piece of property.” But not just any piece of land. Ali is committed to keeping The Forbes in New Haven. He said he turned down an attractive offer from someone who wanted to move it out of state. *If you have suggestions, contact Ali at The New Star Diner (203) 562-5582 or call the New Haven Preservation Trust office at (203) 562-5919.*



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## The Trust Partners with the International Festival of Arts & Ideas for the Third Year to Present June Walking Tours

Once again, the New Haven Preservation Trust is collaborating with New Haven's exciting **International Festival of Arts and Ideas** to provide important programs on the history and heritage of our city. Each tour will be led by a member of the Trust's Board of Directors or Advisory Committee, all of whom volunteer their time and expertise for this effort. In past years, the tours have proven to be an important part of the Festival's rich offerings and have been well attended by locals and visitors. This year's theme for the tours, taken from the major Festival pieces, is:

### "The Sacred and Theatrical City: Historic Architecture as the Stage for Life"

These events last for up to 90 minutes, are suitable for all ages, and are presented FREE to all. For further details, please phone the Trust Office: (203) 562-5919.

DATE	TIME	TOUR NAME and DESCRIPTION	MEETING PLACE	LEADER
SUN June 15	2:00 pm	<b>PIRATES &amp; PALISADES OF WESTVILLE</b> Visit New Haven's historic Westville Village from its shopping and restaurant district to the majesty of West Rock's amber cliffs.	Whalley & West Rock Avenues (at Lyric Hall Antiques)	Colin Caplan
WED June 18	5:30 pm	<b>CITY POINT HISTORIC DISTRICT</b> Enjoy one of New Haven's distinctive and oldest residential areas on the harbor front.	South Water & Sea Streets (at the Sound School)	Alex Johnston
THU June 19	12:30 pm	<b>HILLHOUSE AVE. NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT</b> View St. Mary's Church and the many mansions on what Charles Dickens called "The most beautiful street in America."	Sachem Street at Hillhouse Avenue	Channing Harris
FRI June 20	12:30 pm	<b>BROADWAY &amp; BEYOND</b> In the neighborhood where Yale meets the City of New Haven, tour churches representing both the University and the City's diverse communities.	268 Park Street (near Elm, at St. Thomas More Church)	Chris Wigren
FRI June 20	5:30 pm	<b>NEW HAVEN: 400 YEARS OF URBAN PLANNING</b> The Green will provide the framework for discussing New Haven's continuing leadership in urban planning that began in 1639.	Yale's Phelps Gate on College Street (between Elm & Chapel Streets)	Robert Grzywacz
SAT June 21	10:00 am	<b>HISTORIC CHURCHES ON THE GREEN'S EAST RIM</b> Learn about New Haven's rich heritage of downtown sacred spaces: their architecture and works of art.	Corner of College & Elm Streets (by First & Summerfield Church)	Bruce Peabody

**THE NEW HAVEN PRESERVATION TRUST'S MISSION** is to honor and preserve New Haven's architectural heritage — historic buildings and neighborhoods — through advocacy, education, and collaboration.

Our **VISION** is to serve as a catalyst that unites the New Haven community in appreciating the benefits of preserving its architecture as the city grows.

**News & Views** is a quarterly publication of the New Haven Preservation Trust.

Editor: Trina Mace Learned; Copy Editor: Penny Welbourne; Assistant Copy Editor: Anita Buckmaster; Chief Reporter: John Herzan, *Preservation Services Officer for the New Haven Preservation Trust*; Contributing Reporters: Susan Godshall, Bruce Graham, Chris Wigren; Photography: T. Learned, Layout: T. Learned, *Learned1 LLC*

## THE TRUST NEEDS YOU TO HELP US MEET OUR MATCH

As part of a new program in 2007, the State of Connecticut awarded the New Haven Preservation Trust an important Basic Operating Services Grant of \$75,000. The grant can be used for day-to-day expenses such as staff salaries, rent, printing, and postage, as well as for expanding programs central to the Trust's mission.

Just like challenge grants that are offered for public television and other membership organizations, this is a matching grant, which means that each dollar of the \$75,000 Basic Operating Services Grant *must be matched* by donations and other grants secured by the Trust. We

are fortunate to have a new \$15,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven, which we can use as a head start. But we need much more—\$60,000 more if we are to receive the full \$75,000.

This is how it works: every three months, the Trust sends a report to the state detailing our match in terms of cash donations, volunteer hours, and the proceeds of other grants. We can get back in state matching funds as much as we submit, up to the annual total of \$75,000. Your matching gift is critically important. Every dollar you give will allow the Trust to draw down another dollar of the state

grant. But we need to hear from you *before* April 2<sup>nd</sup> in order to meet this year's challenge.

Matching gifts are an easy and important way to double the impact of your contributions. Your tax-deductible gift goes directly toward saving historic structures and advising property owners about restoring their homes. Consider how valuable your gift will be in building our membership base and serving the residents of New Haven. Please send a check to the Trust with "matching funds" written on the memo line.

Thank you.

### The New Haven Preservation Trust



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**Save the date! Tuesday, May 13, 2008**

**47th Annual Meeting of The New Haven Preservation Trust**

*5:30 pm on the 27th Floor Penthouse of the Bank of America Building  
Overlooking the Green at 157 Church Street, New Haven, CT*

**Guest Speaker:**

**Douglas Rae**

Richard S. Ely Professor

Yale School of Organization and Management

Author of: *City: Urbanism and its End* and *Murder in the Model City: The Black Panthers, Yale, and the Redemption of a Killer*