

NEWS & VIEWS

Fall 2017

A Vision for The New Haven Clock Company

BILL KRAUS

RENDERING: COURTESY OF CROSSKEY ARCHITECTS



The New Haven Clock Company was once one of the largest and most innovative clock and watch makers in the world, and one of New Haven's largest employers. At its peak in the 1920s, it manufactured over 3.5 million clocks and watches per year and employed nearly 2,000 men and women.

Its factory, located on Hamilton Street and for many generations affectionately known as "the Clock Shop," was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on March 20 of this year. The oldest section dates to 1866, but through the company's predecessor, the Jerome Manufacturing Company, clock making on the site stretches back to 1842.

After decades of decay, demolition threats, preservation efforts, stalled

**Above: A rendering of the possible rehabilitation of the building.
Right: The building as it presently looks.**

rehabilitation plans, and patchwork maintenance, the factory seems headed for full historic rehabilitation, possibly next year, to be reborn as "The Clock Shop Lofts" with over 120 affordable, rent-controlled artist live/work spaces.

New Haven artists, preservationists, the community at large, and city and state leaders have welcomed the plan, which would not be feasible without federal and state historic tax credits, and an anticipated package of federal, state, and city brownfield funding.

I specialize in redeveloping threatened significant historic buildings for the arts and urban



revitalization, often against daunting odds. This ongoing effort on behalf of the Clock Company building has required assembling many elements including securing grants and developing the historic, architectural, and environmental information necessary for predevelopment and historic designation. Building a working collaboration among the long-term owners, the developer, and city and

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PHOTO: JEAN POGWIZD

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A VISION FOR THE NEW HAVEN CLOCK COMPANY, CONTINUED

state leaders around a common re-use vision has been key.

Along the way I have enjoyed collecting many colorful stories of the building's checkered post-industrial past.

The Preservation Trust helped jumpstart the project by supporting applications for the CT Trust Making Places and DECD Brownfields Planning grant programs in 2014 and 2015 respectively. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Preservation Trust had also worked to list the complex on the State Register of Historic Places and spoke out against economic development proposals that would have demolished parts of the building.

Artists have had an involvement with the factory since at least the 1970s, when anti-elitist, avant-garde artists led by Paul Rukovsky and others established studios and held well-attended exhibits there. A survey conducted in partnership with the Greater New Haven Arts Council suggests that over 300 artists throughout the city, state, and nation, from NYC to LA, are now interested in relocating to the Clock Shop Lofts. This remarkable attractiveness is a testament to the synergy that the re-use vision, the building's evocative character, and New Haven's vibrancy collectively generate.

Two Landmarks Added to New Haven's Modernist Record

CHARLOTTE HITCHCOCK

The Preservation Trust has documented two more Modernist buildings for the collection on our New Haven Modernism website, newhavenmodern.org. The Community Services Building (1965, now the Knights of Columbus Museum) is a low and horizontal structure enclosing a central open space (shown below, left). The Knights of Columbus headquarters tower (1967–69), in contrast, is a vertically oriented 23-story tower (shown at right). Formerly the tower “conversed” with its neighbor the Veterans Memorial Coliseum, whose vast parking deck roof formed a strong horizontal counterpoint. But with the demolition of the



Coliseum in 2007, today the museum and the headquarters tower have resumed their dialogue across a block-long undeveloped site.

The two structures mark the southern entrance to our downtown from the highway network. They were intended as symbolic “billboards” along with the 1968 Armstrong Rubber (later Pirelli) complex. These visual markers were designed to attract the drivers of vehicles speeding along the new modern highways and bring them into the downtown for shopping or business.

Kevin Roche with his partner John Dinkeloo created the dramatically abstract Knights of Columbus tower as a bold sculptural form. Yet like the early European Modernists of the International Style, Roche was inspired by forms seen in

bridges and industrial structures and took his cues for materials and technical methods from those sources. The tower looms over a low green forest of honey locust trees, expressing the Corbusian Modernist ideal of towers in an open landscape that lay behind the vision of New Haven's redevelopment planning in the late 1950s.

The museum, originally built as offices for local non-profits, expresses another aspect of Corbusier-inspired Modernism. It uses exposed concrete or “beton brut” in a design by William DeCossy, who was a protege of Paul Rudolph at the Yale School of



Architecture. DeCossy, a partner in the firm of Douglas Orr, created an expressive tour de force with “pilotis” (columns), ribbed concrete, and glass curtain walls, surrounding a hidden courtyard where a water feature and bamboo grove provide

a calm oasis. A multi-level sculptural corner at the entrance accents the building and adds the signpost feature to this building. Deftly reconfigured by Kevin Roche's firm after the purchase by the Knights of Columbus, the museum use seems ideal for such an expressive design.

As these two buildings turn fifty years old and become certifiably historic, their design quality and outstanding stewardship have brought them into the next century as icons of the idealism of New Haven's urban renewal era and as key players in the contemporary cityscape.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

I write this letter just a few days into my new role as President of the Preservation Trust. My first task on behalf of the Trust is to thank the outgoing President, Bruce Peabody, for four years of creative, productive, committed, and consistently good-humored leadership. Bruce can be credited with bringing so much to the Preservation Trust, from programming inspiration to committee organization. Thank you, Bruce. We are delighted you will continue as a Board member.

Not surprisingly, the Preservation Trust is often out and about in New Haven. Our members might be gathering for a tour or talk. Our preservation specialist might be running a homeowners' tax credit workshop or meeting with developers to give on-site advice. The preservation committee might be checking out a building where they have been alerted new construction is proposed.



Those who work on the New Haven Modernism website might be photographing an additional entry. Membership committee members might be manning a table at a local festival. Regularly in May we all gather at City Hall for our annual Awards Ceremony. But the heart of our activities is at our office at 922 State Street, staffed by Robin Valovich, Operations Manager, and John Herzan, Preservation Services Officer. The list of

activities there is equally long and varied — from writing grant applications and explaining the implications of historic designation to publicizing events on Facebook and processing date-plaque orders.

Which brings me to my second immediate task on behalf of the Preservation Trust: to ask for the support of our members and friends. For the past year I was Deputy Chair of the Trust's finance committee. Two themes marked every monthly meeting: worry about continued State funding and appreciation of the essential financial contributions made by our supporters, individual and corporate. The balance sheets leave us in no doubt: to continue our work we need the financial support of our members and friends. Our Annual Appeal will launch just as this newsletter is published. Please support the Preservation Trust generously.

On the very day I was approached about taking on the role of President of the Preservation Trust, I read the sad sorry of the loss, through neglect, of a former oyster house in Fair Haven. Even as this newsletter celebrates New Haven's past industrial dynamism and its remarkable Modernist landmarks, the need remains for us to advocate on behalf of this city's rich, diverse, and fascinating historic places.

Please join with me in that task,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rona Johnston".

Rona Johnston

ARCHITECTURE, CULTURE & COMMUNITY

As the Preservation Trust responds to its commitment to support preservation in all New Haven's neighborhoods, we recently coordinated arrangements for Brent Leggs, a Senior Field Officer for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to talk to a local audience about his experiences and objectives. A co-author of *Preserving African American Historic Places*, Mr. Leggs has worked with cities and groups throughout the country to plan with them the preservation of African American historic landmarks and buildings. He aims to help these heritage places not just survive but also flourish,



ensuring they are financially viable and an active presence in the community.

Mr. Leggs' invigorating talk, entitled "Preserving and Celebrating African American Historic Places," was held on November 8, hosted by the congregation of Dixwell Avenue Congregational United Church of Christ in their remarkable Modernist building. Founded in 1820 and located in a historic neighborhood near downtown New Haven, Dixwell Avenue Congregational is the oldest African American UCC church in the United States.

The talk took place too close to our publication deadline for us to provide a full report in this newsletter. Look for an article in the next issue of *News & Views*.

The talk was sponsored by the State Historic Preservation Office.



Crawford Manor and Its Missing Milieu

SEAN KHORSANDI

Paul Rudolph's George Crawford Manor (90 Park Street, 1962–66) will always remain an unfinished architectural idea. The building itself is technically complete—109 homes stacked in fifteen levels with floors, walls, and roof enclosures forming an envelope fit for human occupancy. But the architect's *intent* remains unmet.

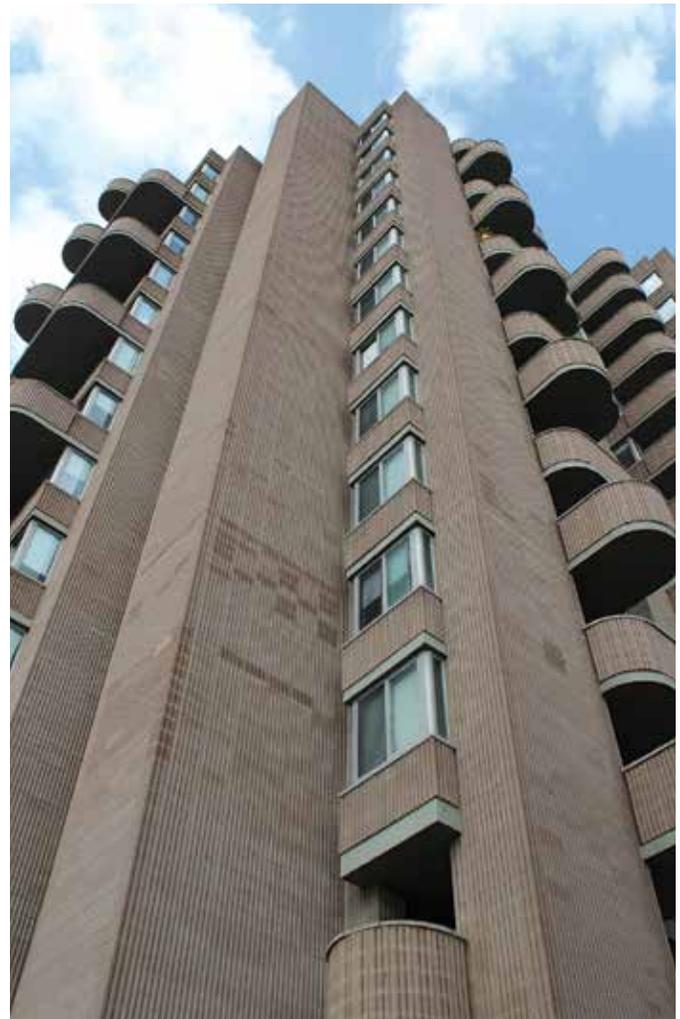
Rudolph envisioned his elderly living complex in tandem with greater shifts in New Haven land-use policy. His expectation in 1962 was that Crawford Manor would rise as a landmark along the tree-lined, still-to-be-realized Oak Street Connector, which for decades would divide the Yale campus and downtown New Haven from the Hill neighborhood and the School of Medicine to the south. For this reason, Rudolph designed the building to read at two scales: by the inhabitant arriving by foot, who would have a tactile appreciation of the fluted-block construction, and by the motorist zipping past, who would internalize the overall massing and volume.

From 2006 the Oak Street Connector gradually passed out of state ownership and back to the city. The S/L/A/M Collaborative's 3-story Pfizer Clinical Research Unit (1 Howe Street, 2005) was the first sign of reinvestment. Accompanying the once-pioneering Douglas Orr, deCossy,



Winder Associates' Air Rights Garage (60 York Street, 1976–80), which had straddled the thoroughfare alone for a quarter century, Pfizer's building touched down and filled the ground plane. Behnisch Architekten's 6-story Park Street building (55 Park Street, 2010) and John Watts Associates' Alexion Pharmaceutical's 14-story Global Headquarters (100 College Street, 2016) ensured traffic encircled the gap cleared for the highway but never dominated, as streets were repatriated and the urban renewal divide was once again filled.

Today, the former Oak Street Connector, aka CT Route 34, aka North Frontage Road, aka Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is a built, demolished, and reconstructed reminder of generations of inconsistent decision making and change, but unfortunately not the change Rudolph had counted on.



On October 7, 2017, the Preservation Trust marked the annual Docomomo Tour Day with a tour of Crawford Manor led by Sean Khorsandi.

Walking Tour Highlights: Creativity, Industry, and Devotion

CHARLOTTE REA

The summer tours conducted by the Preservation Trust for the 2017 International Festival of Arts & Ideas highlighted and honored the rich but often unknown history of New Haven: former factories turned to modern use and churches still active and vibrant. The



tours, led by Trust guides, featured the Audubon Arts District, Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church, ConnCAT in the former Winchester Repeating Arms factory, and the River Street industrial district.

Once a center of industrial production in New Haven, Audubon Street is now defined as an arts district, with non-profits and handsome condominiums. Bitsie Clarke and Barbara Lamb shared the story of the decades-long, complicated steps to recognition of the area as an arts-oriented district. Architect Charles Brewer devised a master plan for the district, a model of mixed-use development. The former McLagon Foundry building and the Spanish Renaissance Revival-style former home of Temple Mishkan Israel were repurposed, and new structures were built to serve the differing needs of arts organizations, non-profits, and residents. Audubon Street is now a lively, well-preserved, desirable place to live, work, make music, and create art.

The tour of ConnCAT, the Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology, highlighted an imaginatively reworked former garage for servicing and repairing fire trucks of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company. In light of ConnCAT's mission "to inspire, motivate,



and prepare youth and adults for educational and career advancement," the structure has now become an exciting place for people to learn culinary arts and medical technical skills. Guided by CEO Eric Clemons, tour participants saw students proud of their learning and delighted to share their building, which is a significant example of adaptive use. Designed by Bruce Wujcik of Svigals + Partners, ConnCAT's state-of-the-art facilities and restaurant, which offers lunch to the public, both preserve the past and prepare the future.

Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church, built in 1969 and designed by John MacLane Johansen (1916–2012), serves a thriving congregation in the Newhallville section of New Haven. Originally part of a comprehensive plan for an urban center and oasis, Dixwell Congregational stands as an excellent example of Brutalist architecture that reflects the modern world on the exterior while providing an interior that projects

warmth, friendliness, and spirituality. The handsome wooden pews and altar bring comfort while the light through the windows enhances the reflective feeling.

River Street was once filled with working factories that produced "boilers, hand tools, carriage components, beer,



Left: Audubon Arts District. Center, Top: ConnCAT. Center. Bottom: River Street. Above: Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church.

architectural ornaments, automobiles, plumbing" and more (Bruce Clouette, "Walking Tour of the River Street Historic Industrial Area," Handout for Tour, 2017). Tour members were impressed by the area's vitality, the lively workplaces and businesses, the trucks coming and going as well as the size and good condition of the buildings – and the continuing industrial activity. River Street originally had a railroad line so that manufacturers could load and transport their goods. As an area currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the site is still dynamic – and even has a park for green space, children, and play, with the Good Humor truck singing in the background.

The purpose of our tours is to focus attention on historic places and to inspire increased dedication to preservation, so we visit a wide variety of buildings in different locations to attract a broad audience. Some tours must be limited to members only and some tours are open to the general public. We heartily invite new members, who benefit from advance email notification about upcoming tours and events. Please visit our website and Facebook for more information. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Preservation Trust 2017 Annual Meeting

The Preservation Trust's 2017 Annual Meeting was held on September 27, with members and friends of the Trust gathering this year at Paul Rudolph Hall, the home of the Yale School of Architecture. The Trust was again honored to have Mayor Toni Harp welcome the attendees. In her introductory words, Mayor Harp stressed the importance of the Preservation Trust's work in upholding the city's architectural heritage.

Our speaker this year was Deborah Berke, Dean of the Yale School of Architecture and principal of Deborah Berke Partners. In her talk, entitled



Top: Deborah Berke, Dean of the Yale School of Architecture, presents her talk in the auditorium of Paul Rudolph Hall. Center: Mayor Toni Harp talks to Preservation Trust members at the Silent Auction and Book Sale.

“Old and New,” Dean Berke presented several thoughtful projects, emphasizing the importance of embracing a building's past while reinventing it for modern use.

With projects including the reworking of a long-abandoned H. H. Richardson-designed mental asylum

into a stylish boutique hotel and the expansion and reorientation of I.M. Pei's Rockefeller Arts Center at SUNY Fredonia, Dean Berke's practice explores the range of renovation from “respectful” to “irreverent.” In the case of the 122 Community Arts Center in Manhattan, Dean Berke's firm transformed a historic public school into a home for arts groups and a community service organization with a new 5-story addition, playing off the lightness of the new elements against the heavy masonry of the school building.

At the start of the evening, outgoing President Bruce Peabody led a short business meeting with highlights of the past year and the election of three new and three returning directors. Treasurer Susan Godshall reported that the 2016 independent audit confirmed a net profit. Bruce thanked the Annual Meeting sponsors and encouraged

In her introductory words, Mayor Harp stressed the importance of the Preservation Trust's work in upholding the city's architectural heritage.

attendees to continue to attend Preservation Trust events.

As is our tradition, the presentation was followed by a Reception and a Silent Auction, this year accompanied by a new component: a Book Sale of architecture, art, and city-planning books from all eras, a wide array of tempting materials to read or browse.

The Annual Meeting is an opportunity for the Trust to reflect on the achievements of the previous year. It is also an opportunity to bring our community together, to learn, to socialize, and to look to the future. The Preservation Trust and its future would be nothing without the support of its members and friends.

Surviving, Just: The Pirelli Building

DUO DICKINSON

PHOTO: ROBERT GREGSON



New Haven was in full urban renewal hubris in 1968 when architect Marcel Breuer drew up his arresting plans for a Modernist gateway to New Haven and to New England. The remarkable Armstrong Rubber Company corporate headquarters were constructed on new landfill at the interchange between Interstates 95 and 91. Architectural historian Elizabeth Mills Brown has recorded that “the deep modeling was designed to create an instantly striking

The Pirelli Building before destruction of the warehouse wing that stretched back behind the floating structure.

image of light and shadow when seen from a speeding car.” The structure still greets those arriving at or passing by New Haven, but as a truncated and derelict carcass that functions as an Ikea billboard.

Around 1985, Armstrong Rubber was bought out by Pirelli Tire (hence

the “Pirelli Building”). The property eventually passed to Ikea, which despite the Modernist look of its products preferred its global big-box style for its buildings. Local advocates, led by the New Haven architecture community and supported by the Preservation Trust, pressed to prevent the tear-down of Breuer’s dynamic dyad. The essence of the building was saved, as we see it today, but three-fourths of the two-story base, upon which the Pirelli corporate headquarters had floated, were razed.

Breuer’s building is remarkable for its sculptural qualities, characterized by subtle and distinctive custom cast-concrete paneling. Although externally the building still displays much of its original geometric design, the emptied boxes have no heat, water, or electricity, let alone their original Modernist furnishings. The early theft of the copper piping left much damage in its wake. One recent visitor commented that the building’s present condition feels “disrespectful.”

We can only hope the next report we carry on this Modernist icon will contain an energizing and creative new chapter.

Join the New Haven Preservation Trust

Please become a member of the New Haven Preservation Trust today.

Membership support is a key part of our operating budget. We need you to support preservation in New Haven!

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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.

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BELOW In August, Preservation Trust members and friends toured the former Connecticut Savings Bank building, located at Church and Crown Streets.
Architect: Gordon, Tracy and Swartwout (1906).

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