

NEWS & VIEWS

Summer 2018

Awards Season

Oscars and Grammys. Pulitzers and MacArthurs. Nobels and Heismans. The New Haven Preservation Trust Annual Awards may not (yet) have quite the glamour, exposure, and financial value of some of the more prominent annual awards, but they too are a celebration of remarkable achievement.

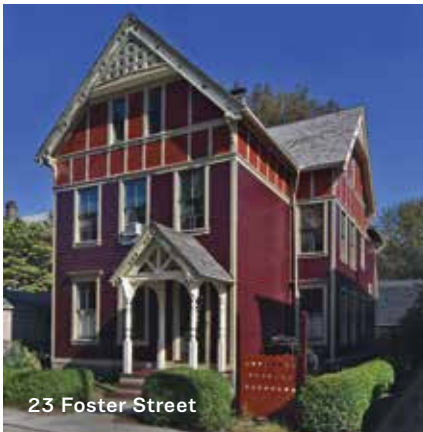
Each year our Awards Committee identifies a preservation theme and then explores, debates, and presents the buildings and individuals that it believes merit our named awards. This year the hard-working committee, made up of Peg Chambers, Channing Harris, and John Herzan and chaired by Duo Dickinson, selected the all-too prescient theme “Saving New Haven.” The buildings celebrated range from the fully restored and successfully adapted to those whose survival is currently being championed. And the individuals and communities honored are inspirational advocates of our city’s past, both distant and more recent.

Then, at a May ceremony at City Hall attended and addressed by Mayor Toni Harp, the Preservation Trust presented four awards:

The 2018 Merit Plaque “for historic buildings that have been authentically restored, or sensitively rehabilitated for adaptive use” celebrated the rescue of what remains of **Henry**



Trinity Home Chapel



23 Foster Street

Austin’s Trinity Home Chapel through its creative incorporation into the Metro on Chapel Project (Robert Smith, Jr., developer, and Sam Gardner, architect).

The House Preservation Award is given “for houses as outstanding representatives of their period. They exhibit much of their original

character and condition by virtue of continued appropriate maintenance or sensitive rehabilitation.” The 2018 recipient was **Robert W. Grzywacz**, acknowledging forty years of thoughtful devotion to his home at **23 Foster Street**, which recently culminated in the painstaking recreation of the house’s pristine Queen Anne/Stick Style exterior.



Dixwell Avenue Congregational
United Church of Christ



Karyn M. Gilvarg

The 2018 Landmark Plaque “for buildings or sites of outstanding and enduring architectural and historical significance” was given to the **Dixwell Avenue Congregational United Church of Christ** – believed to be the oldest African American Congregational UCC church – which was designed by Modernist architect John Johansen. (A month ago we were thrilled to learn that the church’s application for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and for inclusion on the State Register of Historic Places was approved.)

The Margaret Flint Award “for individuals or organizations whose extraordinary support of Historic Preservation deserves recognition” went to **Karyn M. Gilvarg** who

23 FOSTER STREET PHOTO: ROBERT W. GRZYWACZ

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AWARDS SEASON, CONTINUED

served as Executive Director of the New Haven City Plan Department for more than twenty years with exemplary integrity and fairness and an encyclopedic knowledge of the City.

Why does the Trust give these awards?

We want the recipients to know that what they are doing is appreciated by a wider community and that their individual efforts make New Haven a richer place to live. All three buildings, Trinity Home Chapel, Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church, and 23 Foster Street, are now distinctive landmarks in their neighborhoods. We thank the recipients for rescuing, stewarding, renovating, or shepherding the past into the present.

We want to hold up the exemplary so that others, too, will feel inspired. These examples show us how varied preservation can be, carried out here

professionally, communally, and individually. These achievements took time, money, and great effort. They came with disappointment and compromise, but also with commitment and vision. (And never forget, the Preservation Trust is here to help.)

And bluntly put, we want publicity for the cause of preservation. We want everyone who received an invitation to the event, everyone in City Hall that Tuesday, everyone who read the New Haven Independent or New Haven Register the next day to know that preservation matters, and for the Trust it is a matter for celebration, not simply disapproval and disappointment.

What preservation achievements in our community do you think we should appreciate, hold high, and publicize? Please let us know what you see achieved in your own neighborhood or community. And the nominations are...

Community Participation TRINA MACE LEARNED

In 1986 the New Haven Preservation Trust did its homework. Through careful research, the Edgewood Park Historic District was documented for the National Register of Historic Places. It's a large district — 232 structures on slightly



more than 240 acres of land on streets branching off Edgewood Avenue between Yale and Sherman Avenues — and, according to the nomination, all but one

structure contribute to the district's historical and architectural designation.

Late last fall, when an out-of-state developer obtained the option to buy and develop the empty, foreclosed house at 1377 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard, district neighbors took notice. Converting this oversized, Queen Anne-style structure to nine micro-apartments was not compatible with our neighborhood, our district. Our concern was the potential loss of the original family spirit of Edgewood, and the further incursions that might follow.

Ed and Doris Zelinsky, whose front windows view the foreclosed home, led the charge to redirect the building's fate. Neighbors flocked to their house for a strategy session, then accompanied them to City Hall for the zoning hearing. On December 12, 2017, twenty neighbors attended the hearing; eleven lined up to testify. Each one spoke of their love for this historic neighborhood. Law School professor Ed Zelinsky recited pertinent details of the zoning regulations, architect Eric Epstein spoke of the

longevity of his family's residency and the frustration that New Haven-based buyers were rebuffed in the sale process conducted by Wells Fargo Bank, and a poised, eloquent child objected to the developer's parking lot that would sacrifice a beautiful tree.

Drawing on information provided by John Herzan, the Preservation Trust's Preservation Services Officer, that included the National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination form and the Historic Resources Inventory Building and Structures fact sheet on 1377 Ella T. Grasso Boulevard, I spoke of preserving the neighborhood's beautiful family homes, built between 1889 and 1920 to create this urban development a century ago.

That evening, the City Plan Department deemed the developer's proposal, hastily reduced to a scheme for five rental units just before the hearing, incomplete. The next day the developer abandoned the project, and the neighborhood launched their quest for a new buyer with a better plan.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

For a Scot transplanted over a decade ago to New Haven, getting acquainted with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was essential for me to understand historic preservation in the United States. The rationale cited in the first section of that Act makes for illuminating reading. The term "heritage" appears frequently. So, for example, "the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest so that its vital legacy ... will be maintained and enriched for future generations of Americans." And again: "future generations" are to be given "a genuine opportunity to appreciate and enjoy the rich heritage of our Nation."

Heritage is a term that I have come to recognize embraces so much of the work of the New Haven Preservation Trust. It suggests to me something so much bigger than the individual. It speaks of tradition, values, and responsibility. It warns us that what we do in the present must be honest about the past and will have an impact in the future, for better or for worse. For over fifty-five years the Preservation Trust and its many members and supporters have championed, defended, and celebrated New Haven's remarkable physical heritage. It is our responsibility to think long term. We must ensure that the immediate (which includes today's taste and today's economic imperatives, as we learn in this Newsletter) does not eliminate memories of the past that are the inheritance of those future generations.

The goals may be expansive and timeless, but the reality is that the commitment and skills of a range of individuals and groups make all the difference. One such individual is our recently retired Preservation Services Officer, John Herzan, whose career has been given with dedication and determination to preservation in Connecticut — you can read an interview with John in this Newsletter. And I am delighted to introduce our Newsletter readers to our new Preservation Services Officer, Elizabeth Holt, whose innovative thinking, multifaceted skills, and relish for preservation so impressed our search committee. Welcome to the Preservation Trust, Elizabeth!

One other phrase from that introductory section of the Preservation Act has also continued to resonate with me. Preservation is called "a living part of our community life." In that phrase I see YOU, the readers of this Newsletter, attendees at our lectures and tours, financial supporters of the work of the Trust, visitors to our Modernism website (newhavenmodern.org), advice-seekers at our office. I see those who rejoice at a hard-fought preservation success and are angered by wanton neglect. I see those who insist that the diversity of New Haven's past must be acknowledged and respected. Preservation is no solitary endeavor. The wider community is essential to what the Preservation Trust can do. The wider community is also integral to why the Trust exists. Please continue to support our efforts, in word and deed.

Sincerely

Rona Johnston



Elizabeth Holt, NHPT Preservation Services Officer

As a Preservation professional, Elizabeth brings a welcome range of skills to the Trust. Her role is both practical and collaborative, above all in working with property owners, architects, developers, volunteers, city officials, and the public. Additionally, she will guide the Trust in identifying Preservation concerns and in designing its responses. Her position as Preservation Services Officer is essential to the Trust and, in turn, to the Trust's contribution to New Haven.

ENCOUNTERS

As many members already know, the Preservation Trust is eager not only to talk about New Haven's historic places, but also to make opportunities for enthusiasts to experience these buildings for themselves.



We are delighted that Yale Divinity School has offered to host our Annual Meeting, to be

held this year on the evening of October 4, in its newly renovated Old Refectory and Old Common Room. Opened in 1932, the buildings were rescued from proposed demolition, with the passionate advocacy of Vincent Scully, nearly twenty years ago. The Annual Meeting will be an opportunity for the wider New Haven community to see the results of the recent extensive renovation project as well as to learn about the Trust's activities.



As part of our project to highlight and celebrate New Haven's remarkable Modernist

architecture, each year the Preservation Trust provides a tour of a Modernist building close to DOCOMOMO tour day (see www.docomomo.com). This year, on October 6, members and friends of the Trust will have the opportunity to join a guided tour of the architecturally distinguished 'California-style' airy and angular Foote School, designed in the late 1950s by E. Carlton Granbery and Diana Allyn Granbery.

Further details will be advertised and sent to our members in advance of these events. Become a member (see page seven of this Newsletter) to ensure you are fully informed about all the Trust's advocacy and activities.

A Reflection on the Demolition of Philip Johnson's Colonnade and Pavilion at Science Hill

DUO DICKINSON, FAIA

When the Kline Tower was built in 1966, it was, briefly, the tallest building in New Haven. It was designed by the ever-clever architect Philip Johnson, who used brick cylinders to create a vertical lab stack. His tower had resonance with the Knights of Columbus building by Kevin Roche,

layered laboratories – Johnson was creating a system of Modernist, nay Brutalist, simplification and abstraction. Roche effectively used the Knights of Columbus Tower as a full counterpoint for his subsequent Coliseum. Similarly, any number of cathedrals, the new colleges at Yale, and Harkness Tower have a horizontal yin to their launching yang. Johnson knew that his vertical expression needed a horizontal counterpoint and fully extended his system of tubes to become a lateral covered walk and pavilion. The aesthetic essence of the structural/mechanical tube system employed in Kline Tower was simply rat-tat-tatted

arguably contrived, maybe even gratuitously forced, as bulbous hollow brick drums caricatured the equipment-laden cylindrical piers of the tower. But the extension of Johnson's abstraction was a clear expression of his mind and personality.

Johnson's work ran with the Zeitgeist. His Glass House skipped after Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House, his and John Burgee's AT&T Building/Chippendale Skyscraper surfed on the short PoMo wave, and the Kline tail dutifully followed in the wake of the tower.

And now that tail is gone.

When the Darwin D. Martin House in Buffalo by Frank Lloyd Wright lost its pergola and temple terminus 40 years ago that building suffered. In New Haven, I miss the tail of Breuer's Pirelli building and I miss the Coliseum, with the vertical buildings that remain lessened by their horizontal counterparts' absence.

The plaza once defined by Johnson's colonnade and pavilion is now filled. The new "pavilion" designed by Pelli Clarke Pelli, with a roof and columns seemingly seeded by the nearby School of Management designed by Norman Foster, is attached at both sides to structures, new and existing, and despite its "transparency" any sense of space, and Johnson's way of thinking, is lost.

Life goes on, buildings change. But Yale never asked anyone, or at least not the New Haven Preservation Trust, about the loss of architect Johnson's colonnade, pavilion, and the space he created by the tower placement itself. Maybe they did not want to hear what we would have said.

Roth and Moore's Seeley G. Mudd Library was lost in the flood of Yale's new Stern-designed Murray and Franklin Colleges. But at least the community was told of Yale's intention to remove the library. Even though Yale did not agree with the arguments made and did what it was entitled to do, there was a conversation.

At Kline Tower a classic architectural gesture and its rationale have been quietly erased.



which opened three years after Kline. Who inspired whom is up for question, but both buildings' verticality is not arguable.

In generating a tower of tubes at Kline – they both supported and connected mechanical services for 16 floors of

around a plaza Johnson defined by this colonnade and folly.

The result edged the space that ended the visual axis of Hillhouse Avenue far below and across Sagem Street. But it was largely unseen by pedestrians below. These architectonic manipulations were

TOP PHOTO: ROBERT W. GRZYWACZ

Highlighting African American Heritage: Look Again at the Lower Dixwell Avenue Neighborhood

EDWARD E. CHERRY, FAIA

In October 2018, I attended a presentation entitled "Preserving and Celebrating African American Historic Places" at the Dixwell Avenue Congregational United Church of Christ. The talk, by Brent Leggs of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, was about the preservation of sites of significance to African American communities.

At the completion of the presentation I was left with the feeling that the speaker, and perhaps many in the audience, was

many churches and other organizations which have worked hard to do just what he had spoken of, to "preserve and celebrate" their historical treasures. Mr. Leggs did not mention the numerous historical buildings and places in the Dixwell Avenue



Preservation Review Board of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. Those buildings include St. Luke's Episcopal Church, the Goffe Street Special School (now known as the Prince Hall Masonic Temple), built, privately, in 1846 as the first school for Black children in Connecticut, located on the corner of Goffe and Sperry Streets; Varick Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church; and the Hannah Grey Home on Dixwell Avenue at Charles Street. Other buildings listed as part of the Winchester Repeating Arms Historic District include the N & B Sosensky Hardware Store, the Monterey Club, and Curry's Confectionery. Through the years Sosensky, the Monterey Club, and Curry's Confectionery lost their historic fabric, but

These historic buildings, most important to New Haven's Black community, survive and will flourish.

because of the care and effort of their owners, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, the Masonic Temple, the Hannah Grey Home, and the Varick Church have survived and have retained their historic character, and can be visited and studied.

Other historical buildings were destroyed during the well-known New Haven Urban Renewal Program of the 1960s. Now lost are Dixwell Community House, which was located at 100 Dixwell Avenue, the Dixwell Congregational Church at 98 Dixwell Avenue; the Lyric Theater which was located where the Urban Renewal bland Dixwell Shopping Plaza now stands. The Rakorta Club, a local private club owned by Black businessman John Robinson, was also located in the area now occupied by the shopping plaza.

I would ask you to see for yourself by taking a Walk New Haven Ethnic Heritage Center tour of Lower Dixwell Avenue, an opportunity to relive the life and spirit of this once wonderful and exciting neighborhood of New Haven. These historic buildings, most important to New Haven's Black community, survive and will flourish.

area, many of which are deemed historically important enough to have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It could have been possible to leave the event with the feeling that there are no buildings of a historical nature left in the Dixwell area.

Yet several buildings are listed on the National Register individually or included in a National Historic District. Listing is a product of careful and professional study and approval of the case for submission to the Department of the Interior by the State Historic Preservation Officer on the recommendation of the State Historic

not aware of the very real historical facts of this vibrant section of New Haven and of the preservation efforts performed by the

John Herzan, An Interview

On May 30, 2018, after almost fifteen years at the New Haven Preservation Trust as Preservation Services Officer, John Herzan retired. John grew up in the Boston area and served as the National Register Coordinator for the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office for 25 years, before joining the Preservation Trust in 2003. Shortly before his official departure, we asked him to reflect on his long and productive engagement with Historic Preservation in Connecticut, and particularly New Haven.

it an attractive New England state to call home, but its relatively small size and proximity to New York City have resulted in development pressures that threaten the state's sense of place. Consequently, to meet new housing and office needs, preservationists must continually strive to match vacant or underutilized historic resources (such as industrial buildings or schools) with contemporary developments. This has been particularly evident in New Haven, where historic industrial complexes such as the Strouse Adler Corset Company, the Winchester Repeating Arms Company, and the Yale Brewing Company have been imaginatively repurposed for modern living.



What drew you to historic preservation and how did you become involved?

Since adolescence I have been fascinated by the built environment. Watching the renovation of my parents' mid-nineteenth-century home along with architectural history studies in high school, college, and graduate school confirmed my passion. When a Federal-style residence on my hometown street was to be demolished for a nondescript apartment block, I was alarmed and joined a group of local residents in persuading the developer to locate the complex around the old house. While that solution compromised the street's historic character, it saved a period building. Over the years I have come to realize that compromise is often necessary to succeed in historic preservation.

What is distinctive about the issues faced by preservation advocates in Connecticut, and perhaps specifically in New Haven?

Connecticut's historical environment and scenic attributes make

How has historic preservation changed over the years you have been professionally active?

In 1978, when I became Connecticut's National and State Register of Historic Places Coordinator, the criteria for historic designation were applied more conservatively than they are today. For example, when Connecticut's last McDonald's "drive-up" restaurant — the kind flanked with high golden arches — was to be razed for the then newer "eat-in" model, New London preservationists mobilized to have the building placed on the State Register of Historic Places. However, the Connecticut Historical Commission declined their application stating that such recognition could be construed by the public as the State's "endorsement" of a commercial enterprise. Currently, preservationists have a more inclusive understanding of what constitutes a historic resource. It is not just the classic Connecticut Green surrounded by white churches and vintage Colonial houses; all significant architectural manifestations and styles are recognized as long as they are reasonably intact,

represent a period in time, and tell a story. Industrial complexes, the economic bases of many Connecticut municipalities, have been identified along with a wide variety of residential neighborhoods. Historic places associated with minorities and under-represented groups are also being sought out for designation. And finally, examples of roadside commercial architecture are no longer dismissed for their humble role in American culture.

What success story from your time with the New Haven Preservation Trust gives you greatest joy?

The Preservation Trust's inventory of Modernist architecture in New Haven along with its accompanying website, New Haven Modern, are wonderful accomplishments. Launched in 2008 with State funding, the survey documents New Haven's exceptional concentration of work by Modern Masters and their acolytes. Interviews with prominent architects such as César Pelli and Kevin Roche are included in the site's portfolio of project descriptions and photographs. Researchers and planners can readily reference this information online. In 2015, DOCOMOMO (The International Committee for the Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites, and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement) conferred a "Survey Award of Excellence" on this website in recognition of the Trust's long-term effort to record New Haven's distinguished Modernist architecture.

And what is your greatest disappointment?

My greatest disappointment was the Preservation Trust's inability to nominate the Wooster Square Historic District Boundary Increase to the National Register of Historic Places. For many years I encouraged the Wooster Square Association (WSA) to expand the district's boundary in order to include adjacent historic properties that were part of the neighborhood's development. With assistance from the WSA, the Preservation Trust held a series of local public information meetings to explain

The John Herzan Lecture Fund

In celebration of John's irresistible delight in learning and teaching about the survival of the past, the Preservation Trust has established the John Herzan Lecture Fund. All contributions — large or small — will be used to allow the Trust to continue to offer talks on a wide range of preservation topics for diverse audiences across New Haven. Please consider donating to the fund, in honor of John's rich contributions to our community. Simply send a check, marked Herzan Lecture Fund, to the Trust, or call or email for more information. And then attend our next talk!

the advantages of expanding the historic district including eligibility to apply for attractive historic preservation rehabilitation tax credits. However, some residents were troubled by the unlikely possibility that the City Alders could impose new architectural restrictions on their properties after they were designated. Their strong opposition to the district's boundary increase dissuaded the State Historic Preservation Office from proceeding with the project.

What advice would you give the New Haven Preservation Trust as you move into retirement?

I hope that the Preservation Trust will continue its popular series of architectural tours, lectures, and workshops. Our educational programming has significantly advanced our mission to honor and preserve New Haven's architectural heritage.

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 Located at 127-147 Henry Street, this impressive row of eleven late-Victorian brick townhouses was built c.1875 by John B. Carrington, a speculative real estate investor in the Dixwell Avenue neighborhood.

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