



Hartford Preservation Alliance

You're Invited

Please join us on
Tuesday, May 13, 2003
 at 5:00 p.m.
 for the 3rd Annual

Hartford Preservation Week Awards Ceremony

Charter Oak Cultural Center
 21 Charter Oak Avenue
 Hartford, CT

*Please see insert
 for schedule of events.*

For more information:
 (860) 233-7852

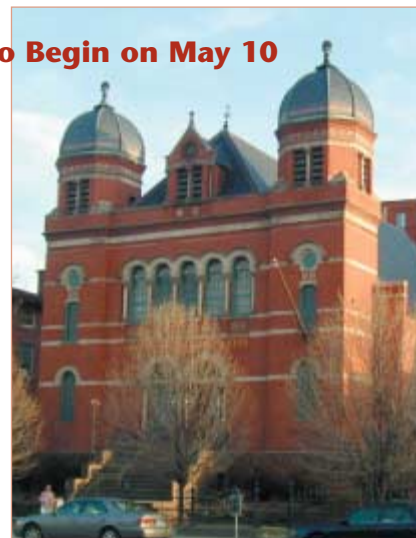
Preservation Week 2003 to Begin on May 10

Preservation Week 2003, which will this year be from May 10 through May 18, will be marked by a number of events celebrating the history and architecture of Hartford. Most prominent will be the Third Annual Jeffery S. Czopor Preservation Week Awards, honoring local organizations and individuals who have made important contributions to architectural preservation in Hartford. The awards are named for Jeffery Czopor, an urban planner and one of the early activists in the Hartford Preservation Alliance, who died of cancer in 2001 at the age of 28. This year's awards will be announced at the annual ceremony.

Preservation Week has been designated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation since 1971. In Hartford, the week has been recognized by Mayoral Proclamation since 2001. JoAnne Bauer, a West End resident, has coordinated the local activities for the past three years, which include neighborhood tours, the awards ceremony, and a calendar of events during the week that celebrate our urban heritage and take place in historic structures in Hartford.

In 2002, fifteen Preservation Week awards were given, including, among others, rehabilitation awards for Mortson Street and Park-Squire-Wolcott in Frog Hollow and for Wethersfield Commons and 27-29 Benton Street in South Green; restoration awards for 179 Allyn Street downtown and for the interior of the Hartford County Courthouse; history education and advocacy awards for the Main Street Interpretive Center for History and for Christ Church Cathedral's Fifth Build lecture series; a preservation advocacy award to the *Hartford Courant* Editorial Board; and a special "spirit of place award" to the Charter Oak Cultural Center.

Check the schedule insert in this newsletter for a list of Preservation Week activities. For more information, call 233-7852. ❁



Charter Oak Cultural Center, site of the 2003 Preservation Week awards ceremony.

Governor's Budget Threatens Historical Commission and Key Urban Preservation Programs

Gov. John Rowland's budget for 2003-2005, which was submitted to the state legislature in late February, threatens the existence of the Connecticut Historical Commission and ends funding for the state's historic rehabilitation tax credit program.

Abolition of the Commission

The budget proposes to abolish the 12-member Connecticut Historical Commission and transfer its responsibilities to a new arts and tourism board, to be known as the Connecticut Commission on Arts, Culture and Tourism. The effect is to merge the Commission with the Commission on the Arts, the Connecticut Film, Video and

Media Office, and the Office of Tourism. The rationale for this consolidation seems to be based on the fact that the Historical Commission manages four museums. Since museums are for tourists, the Commission therefore fits into a tourism board.

The museums, however, are only a small part of what the Connecticut Historical Commission does. Its key functions are not promotional but regulatory. In particular, it reviews all expenditures of state and federal funds which impact buildings and neighborhoods on the State and National Register of Historical Places; and it has the power under the Connecticut Environmental

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- Letter from the President

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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.



City Manager Recommends Creation of Design Center

On February 17, Hartford City Manager Lee Erdmann issued a report recommending the creation of the Hartford Design Center. The Center would be an independent non-profit organization, but it would work closely with developers and the city government to influence the design of development projects in the city. Its sponsoring partners would be the City of Hartford and the University of Hartford, which would each appoint three of the 15 members of the board of directors. The City would provide staff and in-kind support, but the Center would have to find its own funding. The Center would also make use of volunteer design professionals and of faculty-supervised student interns from the University of Hartford.

The Design Center’s mission would be “to promote quality urban design.” Its most important task would be to review the design of all city-assisted projects. In addition, it would develop design guidelines, educate the community about urban design, and advocate for consistency in government decisions involving design. The City

Manager specifically recommends that the Design Center “champion historic districts.”

Although the Design Center would have no formal role in the governmental approval process, its advocates envision a structure in which the City would look more favorably on applications from developers who had first submitted their proposals to the Design Center and obtained Design Center approval for their designs.

The City Manager anticipates that one of the early tasks of the Design Center would be to help implement the recommendations of the Mayor’s Home Ownership Task Force, which has recommended the targeting of city revitalization funds to a small number of transitional neighborhoods.

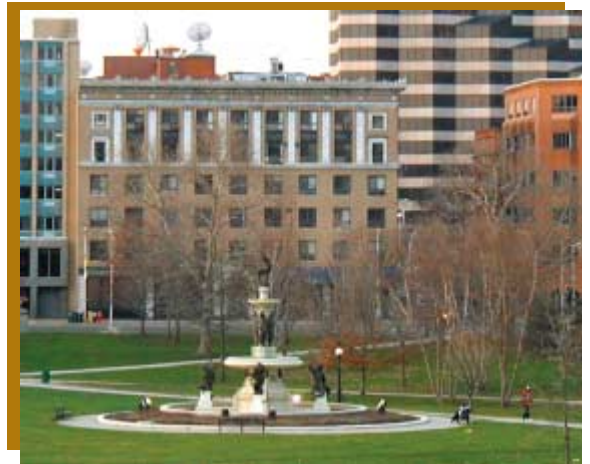
The working group that developed the Design Center proposal included architect and planner Patrick Pinnell; Ken Johnson from the Local Initiatives Support Collaborative (LISC), former deputy City Manager Linda Bayer; Jim Sequin and Les Brodacki from the City’s Planning Department; and Greg Secord of Rebuilding Together. ✿

Appellate Court Rejects Appeal

by Owners of 410 Asylum Street

The federal Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York City has given an important victory to preservationists and the Connecticut Historical Commission by upholding the placement of the High Street Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. The creation of the district, which includes 410 Asylum Street, provided the legal basis under which the Commission was able to obtain an injunction against the demolition of the building. The building owners had sued in federal court, claiming that the district had been improperly created and the building improperly listed. A decision nullifying the district or removing the building from the district would have allowed the owners to demolish the building.

The owners, however, continue to resist any solution which would preserve 410 Asylum Street. HPA hopes that this court decision will encourage the owners to rethink their position and explore as



410 Asylum Street, also known as The Capitol Building, is seen beyond the Corning Fountain in Bushnell Park

an alternative the sale of 410 Asylum Street to an entity interested in restoring it to active use. Because of its location at the north end of Bushnell Park, with spectacular views of the State Capitol, HPA believes that the building would be ideal for use as retail on the first floor and housing on the upper floors. ✿

Protection Act to bring litigation to prevent the demolition of historic buildings. In addition, it decides which properties go on the State Register and its staff plays a decisive role in determining what properties will be submitted for inclusion on the National Register.

It was thus the Commission which sued to prevent the demolition of 410 Asylum Street, and it was the Commission which for more than a decade was able to stave off the demolition of the historic South Green block at Park and Main Streets. It was also the Commission which painstakingly reviewed hundreds of neighborhood buildings being considered for demolition by the City of Hartford. Many of those buildings are still standing today (some of them successfully rehabilitated) because the Commission refused to approve the use of state funds to tear them down.

The effectiveness of these regulatory functions is very much at risk if the Commission is abolished and its functions transferred to a board whose primary role will be to promote tourism.

Termination of the Historic Home Ownership Tax Credit Program

The Governor's budget also recommends terminating the Historic Home Ownership Tax Credit Program. Adopted in 1999, the program has quickly become a critical part of rehabilitation funding in Hartford. It makes available up to \$30,000 per dwelling unit in tax credits for the rehabilitation of one- to four-family buildings that are in neighborhoods listed on the State or National Register and that, after rehabilitation, will be owner-occupied. In Hartford, large parts of the Frog Hollow, Asylum Hill, Clay Hill, and Upper Albany neighborhoods are in historic districts and thus eligible for the tax credits. The program ties in closely with Mayor Perez's effort to expand home ownership in Hartford, since it helps fund the rehabilitation of vacant buildings which are suitable for home ownership.

In fact, Hartford has made use of this program more than any other city in the state. For example, historic tax credits were essential to making the renovation of Mortson Street financially feasible, and they are a critical part of the financing of Putnam Heights, which is Phase 2 of the Mortson/Putnam Heights project. Their potential loss jeopardizes the Putnam Heights portion of that highly successful revitalization project.

The Hartford Preservation Alliance testified before the legislature's Appropriations Committee in opposition to the

Right: A building on Mortson Street, rehabilitated in part with state historic home ownership tax credits.

Below: A mothballed building on Putnam Heights, whose planned rehabilitation will be in jeopardy if the Governor's proposed termination of the program is approved.



abolition the Connecticut Historical Commission and before the Finance Committee against ending the Historic Home Ownership Tax Credit Program. Statewide, opposition to these proposals has been led by

Connecticut Preservation Action and by the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation.

Other negative impacts of the proposed budget

These are not the only parts of the Governor's proposed budget which threaten historical preservation. The budget also terminates the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority's Housing Contribution Tax Credit Program, which helps fund a wide range of non-profit housing rehabilitation programs. In addition, the Governor proposes to take 100% of the revenues of CHFA over the next two years (\$40 million per year) and use it to reduce the state budget deficit. Much of the work funded through these revenue sources involves rehabilitation programs in the older historic portions of center cities. The loss of these programs will significantly reduce the ability to finance the rehabilitation of vacant buildings in the historic parts of Hartford. On the possibility that the legislature may approve these recommendations, CHFA has already begun rescinding funding commitments which it had previously made.

What you can do

If you want to prevent the abolition of the Commission and the termination of the Historic Home Ownership Tax Credit Program, call or write some or all of the following key people. If you don't reach the actual person, always be sure to leave a message stating what the call is about and what action you are requesting:

- John Rowland, Governor (566-4840)
- Kevin Sullivan, Senate President Pro Tem (240-8600)
- Moira Lyons, Speaker of the House (240-8500)
- Martin Looney, Senate Majority Leader (240-8600)
- Jim Amann, House Majority Leader (240-8500)
- Your State Senator (240-8600 for Democrats; 240-8800 for Republicans)
- Your State Representative (240-8585 for Democrats; 240-8700 for Republicans)

Mail to legislators can be addressed to the Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06106. Mail to the Governor should go to the State Capitol, Hartford, CT 06106. 🌸

Goodbye to 233 Washington Street



The building at 233 Washington Street, which until 1971 had been the Taylor & Modeen Funeral Parlor for almost 50 years, was demolished in February by its present owner, Gennaro Capobianco, after efforts to preserve the building failed. He did, however, withdraw his demolition notices as to the Samuel Kellogg House at 247 Washington Street and the Morris Marks House at 598 Farmington Avenue. 🌸

Clarification

An article in the Autumn 2002 issue of the HPA newsletter referred to 233 Washington Street by its historic name, the Taylor & Modeen Funeral Parlor. This may erroneously have led some to believe that the building is still owned by the Taylor and Modeen families, who, in fact, sold the building in 1971 when their funeral home moved to West Hartford, where it is still located. The Taylor and Modeen families have long had no connection with the building and had nothing to do with its demolition. HPA regrets any unintentional implication to the contrary.

Hartford Websites

HPA encourages all readers to check out two fascinating websites on Hartford.

Karen O'Maxfield's *Hartford, Connecticut: Landmarks ~ History ~ Neighborhoods* includes a variety of Hartford photographs, as well as a compilation of books about Hartford and Hartford architecture.

The site may be found at <http://hartford.omaxfield.com>

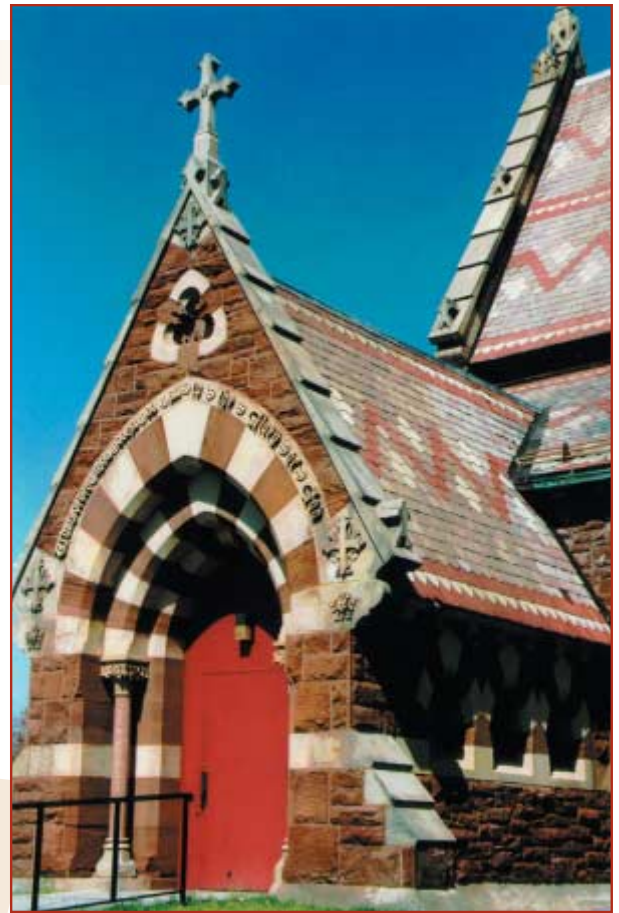
Kevin Flood's *A Miscellany of Hartford History* offers pictures, news, a schedule of events, and, most fascinating, an extensive set of trivia questions about Hartford, many of them architecturally related:

What "redevelopment" project required destroying 12 acres of 18th- and 19th-century architecture?

What massive Hartford landmark stood on the spot now occupied by the parking lot adjacent to the YMCA on Jewell Street?

Believe it or not, a massive building occupied the entire east lawn of the Old State House between 1872 and 1934 (the east lawn stretches toward the Connecticut River). What was this building?

For the answers, visit <http://www.hartfordhistory.net> 🐝



The Caldwell Colt Memorial Building

Karen O'Maxfield Photo



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