

**State Historic Preservation Board
March 31, 2017 at 9:30 a. m.
One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor
Hartford, Connecticut**

MINUTES

Present: Dr. Curran, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Favretti, Mr. Herzan, Ms. Saunders, Dr. Tucker, Mr. Wigren

Staff: Jenny Scofield, Todd Levine, Alyssa Lozupone, Catherine Labadia

Absent: Dr. Bucki, Dr. Feder

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Edwards at 9:37 a.m.

II. REVIEW OF PUBLIC COMMENT PROCEDURES

Copies of the public comment procedures were available at the sign-in table.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Wigren requested the correction of the spelling of adjournment at the bottom of page 6.

A motion was made by Mr. Favretti, second by Mr. Wigren to approve the minutes of the March 31, 2016 meeting as amended (Y-7 N-0, Abstained-0).

IV. ACTION ITEMS

A. COMPLETED NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATIONS – Jenny Scofield Reporting

All registration forms are subject to changes made by the board and by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Ms. Scofield reported that for nominations on this agenda, all property owners were notified by mail and other interested parties were notified by email of the pending nomination, 30 to 60 days prior to the meeting. The chief executive officer of each municipality was also notified by mail. For the district, general notice was posted on the town website and a public information meeting was held on February 27, 2017. All nominations were available on the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) website for viewing and download during the noticing period.

1. *Willington: South Willington District (Criteria A and C, local)*

Staff recommended the district eligible for listing at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Industry and Criterion C for Community Development and Architecture. Ms. Scofield introduced a discussion and public request regarding the potential inclusion of Criterion B, as well as a public comment regarding the proposed district boundary.

Ms. Scofield noted that the nomination was initiated by a property owner and the municipality through a Vibrant Communities Initiative project. Property owners were noticed of the nomination from a direct mailing sent on February 13, 2017 based on a town-generated abutter list, checked by SHPO. The notice included the dates of a public information meeting held on February 27, 2017 and the State Review Board meeting date. General notice was posted on the town website on February 14, 2017. Two letters of objection were received from the sole owners of private property, out of a total of 50 owners of private property. No other letters were received. Marguerite Carnell attended the meeting as the consultant for the nomination.

Dr. Tucker favored the nomination. She noted that the information on page 24 was interesting because this complex was a Slater style mill that persisted into the 20th century and enforced paternalism. It functioned as a cohesive family unit. This is a late example.

Mr. Herzan and Ms. Carnell discussed the scale on the district maps.

Mr. Favretti requested clarification in the nomination that River Road is Connecticut Route 32 in the first mention. He asked if the school shown in Photo 9 should be classified as Classical Revival, rather Colonial Revival. Mr. Herzan responded Colonial Revival.

Mr. Wigren noted that the house show in Photo 18 should be described as Colonial Revival instead of Queen Anne.

Mr. Wigren commended the attention paid to the minor industrial buildings in the district. He noted that the houses are generously spaced and that the workers' quarters were designed well. He asked if that was because the owners were present or because the workers were highly skilled. Dr. Tucker noted that the houses are well cared for; they are catered to families and had a high turnover rate so they needed to be built well.

Mr. Herzan asked if there is a case to be made for state significance. Dr. Tucker agreed that was a possibility.

Mr. Edwards noted that the architecture shows the growth of family; the father's house is modest, but the son's house is grander. He asked if the blacksmith shop was built over the river for fire safety.

Mr. Favretti asked where the family farm was. Ms. Carnell responded in the vicinity of No. 165 on the district map in an area now developed.

Ms. Scofield began discussion regarding a public comment regarding the district boundary, using information shown on a PowerPoint slide. The request was to include two spring buildings and a fire reservoir related to the company, outside of core of the district. The fire reservoir was rebuilt in 2011 on a 1924 concrete foundation. Mr. Herzan commented that the boundary would have to include new construction around the spring houses to include the spring houses themselves. He

preferred the proposal as presented because of the distance of the outlying resources from the rest of the district. Ms. Carnell noted that other spring resources are included in the nomination as currently proposed. The discussion concluded that the boundary was reasonable as proposed.

The SRB discussed the question about Criterion B. Ms. Scofield noted that Criterion B was discussed during the drafting of the nomination and was possible, but that Criterion A adequately allowed for recognition of the whole family/mill company. Ms. Scofield shared information regarding patents achieved by Gardiner Hall Jr. Ms. Carnell noted that the town preferred not to pursue Criterion B. Dr. Tucker commented that the whole family associated with the mill village was significant. This was a family business; it defies most textile mills because it was maintained for a long time. Mr. Herzan noted that Criterion B may not strengthen the proposal. The Board requested that additional information on the family be added under Criterion A.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Dr. Tucker to list the South Willington Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-7, N-0, Abstained= 0).

2. *Canaan: Burrall-Belden House (Criterion A-local, Criterion B-state, and C-local)*

Staff recommended the Burrall-Belden House in Canaan for listing under Criteria A, B, and C. It meets Criterion A at the local level in the area of Settlement, Criterion B at the state level in the area of Art, and Criterion C at the local level for Architecture. Ms. Scofield stated that the nomination was initiated by the property owners. No letters of support or objection were received. Tod Bryant attended the meeting as the consultant for the nomination; he noted that the current owners are good stewards of the property.

Mr. Herzan requested an edit on page 15 regarding the statement that the plan is typical of the period. He also requested clarification of the terminology regarding law schools versus law offices (page 76). Mr. Bryant noted that there is no official evidence that the building was used as a law school; the text will be edited to read law office.

The SRB discussed the exterior design of the house. Mr. Bryant noted that Mr. Wigren provided information about houses originally built with two different styles. Mr. Edwards asked if there are two facades because of frontage of two roads; which is the principal entrance? Mr. Wigren commented that there are other historic examples of this plan, which appears as half of a center hall plan with a side hall and garden entrance. Mr. Edwards asked if a pre-made door surround was installed here. Dr. Curran noted the complexity of Colonial architecture and asked if research revealed a desire to remodel to the federal style, which was modern at the time. SRB members noted that not all updating was done at the same time and that there was a trend of updating Colonial farm houses to convert them into stylish country houses beginning with Hill-Stead in 1900.

Mr. Favretti commented that towns without a town green left lawn space between houses and the road.

A motion was made by Mr. Favretti, second by Mr. Wigren; to list the Burrall-Belden House on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-7, N-0, Abstained= 0).

3. *New Canaan: Abijah Comstock House (Criteria A and C, local)*

Staff recommended the Abijah Comstock House in New Canaan for listing at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Social History and Criterion C for Architecture. Ms. Scofield stated that the nomination was initiated by the property owners who attended the meeting in support. James Sexton also attended as the consultant for the nomination. Letters of support were received from the New Canaan Historical Society and the First Selectman. No letters of objection were received.

Mr. Herzan commented that the information on slavery in the nomination is fascinating.

The SRB commented on the floorplan of the house. The size of the house is large and it is unusual to have a square footprint in this area.

The SRB discussed the design of the interior doorways and trim. Mr. Wigren noted the tall doorway shown in photo 12; Mr. Herzan asked how the doorways compare to other buildings in the state? Multiple board members noted the fancier ornament in some of parlor rooms, doorways left with space for carving, tapering at the bottom of doorways reminiscent of Egyptian design, and retention of eighteenth century paneling in the front rooms with Federal paneling in the back parlor.

Dr. Curran asked if the original floor plan had changed. Mr. Edwards noted that the owners appear to have been sophisticated and that a plan of the basement would be helpful. Mr. Sexton noted that the newer rooms have a full basement underneath.

Mr. Wigren requested that the stone wall terracing be mapped.

A motion was made by Mr. Wigren, second by Mr. Herzan; to list the Abijah Comstock House on the National Register of Historic Places (Y-7, N-0, Abstained= 0).

B. PRELIMINARY ELIGIBILITY REVIEWS

Ms. Scofield introduced five projects for which SHPO staff seeks SRB advisory input. She noted that four of these projects should have been placed on the agenda as discussion, rather than action items. The SRB referred to information about each property distributed prior to

the meeting and PowerPoint slides. For potential new nominations, SHPO seeks SRB comments regarding whether or not they have National Register eligibility.

1. B3: St. Thomas Aquinas School, 60 Sheffield Avenue, New Britain

SHPO staff requested that the SRB discuss the potential National Register eligibility of the property under Criterion A for a period of significance beginning in 1955. The majority of the extant property dates from 1955 to 1964; SHPO staff has advised the consultant to focus research on that time period. James Sexton, consultant, and two representatives for the property attended the meeting.

The SRB asked if the development of the complex was specific to New Britain; is it reflected in state or national trends? Comments were made that this school was not particularly Polish and does not fit in with the history of Polish immigrants in the city.

Discussion continued regarding the quantity of similar schools from this time period. SRB members asked how many Catholic schools were built by the Archdiocese in the 1950s; there is not a good sense of how many there were. It is not clear that this resource is unique or of high significance.

There may be a potential story if it is put in broader context. Make sure the narrative is based on history, not sentimentality. However, consider the degradation of the resource. To explore Criterion A, the narrative should tie the property to school expansion by the Archdiocese and compare trends in religious and public education. Greater information about who the students were during 1950s timeframe and why they chose this school for education is important to identify any potentially significant trends.

2. B1: 130 Bank Street, New London

SHPO staff requested that the SRB evaluate whether the property at 130 Bank Street continues to contribute to the Downtown New London Historic District.

SRB members commented that this building is part of the larger historic streetscape and would be a major loss within the landscape.

SRB members discussed whether some of the alterations visible on the exterior were present in 1979 at the time of National Register listing. The storefront appears to date before the late 1970s. J.E. What is material from sill of shop windows to base?

A motion was made by Mr. Wigren, second by Ms. Saunders; to affirm the continued contributing status of 130 Bank Street to the National Register-listed Downtown New London Historic District (Y-7, N-0, Abstained= 0).

3. B2: Lake View Cemetery, East Hampton

Staff requested that the SRB discuss NR eligibility for the oldest portion of the cemetery under Criterion A for association with settlement. A portion of the cemetery was set aside for cemetery use in 1742 during initial settlement of the area, but many of the burials date to the twentieth century. Information on the dates and number of burials was provided.

SRB members advised that a nomination for this cemetery would not likely be approved. There are many cemeteries in the state that may have been delineated or established during settlement and the association of this cemetery is not strong. There are no major notable examples of funerary art.

4. B4 Westport Center HD Boundary Increase

Staff asked for SRB comments on a community member's request to evaluate properties to the north for inclusion in an expanded boundary. The description and justification for the proposed increase provided by the requestor was shared with the SRB in advance of the meeting.

The SRB advised that the character of this area is substantially different than the core of the district and potential infill properties are another barrier. These properties do not appear to fit with that nomination; the boundary for the existing nomination in this location is appropriate. The SRB does not recommend pursuing this proposed expansion.

5. B5: Saugatuck River Swing Bridge, Westport, Integrity Analysis

Staff asked the SRB to provide preliminary feedback regarding the current historic integrity of this National Register listed property. The bridge is individually listed under Criterion A in the area of transportation and Criterion C in the area of engineering design. It is also located within a proposed Bridge Street Historic District (National Register nomination draft in progress) and is proposed as a contributing property under Criterion A.

Changes have been made to the bridge since its National Register listing. The Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) recently completed a Rehabilitation Feasibility Study of the structure and anticipates that work will be required to maintain the bridge. In order for CTDOT to assess potential impacts of any future work or maintenance on the bridge, it is necessary to understand what portions of it are historic and where integrity loss has occurred. The purpose is to be able to evaluate any future projects and understand whether they adversely affect historic features of the bridge. CTDOT prepared a draft Evaluation of Integrity for the property. Mark McMillan attended the meeting on behalf of CTDOT.

Ms. Saunders commented that while some original materials have been lost, the bridge still retains a sense of place.

Mr. Wigren suggested that more detailed narrative about how the property meets Criterion A would be helpful and provide a more balanced picture of the bridge's significance.

Mr. Favretti noted that the Mystic Bridge is also manually operated.

Mr. Edwards commented that the structure could be reinforced by adding rivets, and that is part of its history. The nature of steel construction is that it can be repaired; upgrades are often made to historic buildings. This evolution is important.

SRB members discussed that integrity can also be compromised by inappropriate treatment. Previous work on the bridge compromised the original design but there was an effort to make the overall aesthetic compatible with the historic appearance.

Mr. McMillan asked if changes made to the bridge in the 1990s are National Register eligible.

Mr. Herzan noted that the 1990s changes are not eligible yet, but some of the changes have been in respect to its history.

SRB members concluded that the bridge appears to retain National Register eligibility in its current state. A threshold of loss that would undermine its National Register eligibility was not defined.

V. STAFF REPORT

Ms. Scofield introduced Alyssa Lozupone, a new SHPO staff member. She announced the planned relocation of the office in September, 2017 and reported on plans for the SHPO's statewide historic preservation conference scheduled for May 18, 2017.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

No new business was discussed.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Favretti, second by Mr. Herzan and so moved. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:45 p.m.