

DRAFT MINUTES

**State Historic Preservation Review Board
Friday, June 16, 2023, 9:30 a.m.
In-Person at 450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford and
Teleconference via Microsoft Teams (Recorded)**

Present: Mr. Barlow (via Teams), Dr. Bucki (via Teams), Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards (Chair), Dr. Feder (via Teams), Mr. Herzan (via Teams), Ms. Saunders (via Teams), Mr. Wigren

Absent: Mr. McMillan

Staff: Jenny Scofield (presenting), Cory Atkinson, Mary Dunne (via Teams) Jonathan Kinney, Cathy Labadia (via Teams)

Guests: Nina Caruso (via Teams), Garret Coady, Laura Crosskey, Barbara Lamb, Neil Larson (via Teams), David Lewis (via Teams), Priyanka Panjwani, Sally Tayeb (via Teams), Beth Savage (via Teams), Lauren Coakley Vincent (via Teams)

I. Call to Order

Ms. Scofield confirmed that a quorum of Board members was present in person and via Teams. Mr. Edwards called the meeting to order at 9:38 a.m.

II. Review of Public Comment Procedures

Ms. Scofield provided the hybrid meeting procedures.

III. Approval of the March 24, 2023 meeting minutes

SRB members provided minor edits.

A motion was made by Ms. Saunders, second by Mr. Herzan, to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2022 meeting (Y-8, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Dr. Feder, Mr. Herzan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

IV. Action Items

A. Completed National Register Nominations

All registration forms are subject to changes made by the State Historic Preservation Review Board (SRB) and by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff.

1. Webutuck Valley Agricultural District, Amenia, NY and Sharon, CT (Criteria A and C, local level)

Ms. Scofield introduced the nomination. The proposed district is a 3,800 acre rural area along the Webutuck Creek, in the hamlet of Amenia Union, which was portioned in 1731. There is a total of 245 contributing properties; CT has 37 contributing and 10 non-contributing buildings, and 2 contributing sites. The district meets Criteria A and C for Settlement, Agriculture, Literature, and Architecture, with a period of significance from 1735 to 1973. Since the majority of the district is in New York, the NY SHPO took the lead on the nomination and the draft reflects the typical NY format. The New York State Review Board approved the nomination on June 8, 2023.

Notice of the SRB meeting was sent to all (NY and CT) property owners and NY representatives from the NY SHPO via direct mail in April. Email notice was sent to CT state and local representatives, the Sharon first selectman, Sharon land use administrator, and Sharon Historical Society, 60 days before the meeting. A public community meeting was held by NY and CT SHPO staff on May 9. Three letters of support were received from 6 owners of private property in New York and not letters of objection were received.

Mr. Edwards invited public comments. No comments were heard.

Mr. Edwards requested SRB comments.

Ms. Saunders noted that there is no recognition of Criterion D. She mentioned that the first footnote is about Native American resources found in the area, with artifacts residing in a museum in Connecticut. There are also some counted sites and photos that include mill sites and retaining walls indicating industrial activity, which was critical to early communities. Ms. Saunders also requested one or two representative photographs of the of landscapes, to document their historic importance. Mr. Larson responded that New York would require more detailed documentation for archaeological sites in order to check Criterion D, but if a property contained an archaeological site, it is identified in the nomination. Ms. Saunders stated that there is historic archaeology present, with the mill sites recognized in the nomination. Ms. Scofield summarized the discussion – there is not enough archaeological investigation completed regarding the prehistoric sites, but that the historic period sites may meet Criterion D. Mr. Larson stated that there was not enough documentation for that. Ms. Saunders observed that several mill sites are mentioned; early mill sites were a central focus of these communities. She asked if Criterion D can be checked since they're already listed as properties.

Mr. Edwards referenced the “Troutbeck Manor House” mentioned on p. 7-54. The rest of the nomination refers to it as “Troutbeck”. He stated that he has known a now-deceased son of Joel Spingarn, who always referred to the property just as Troutbeck, and asked if “manor house” was an appropriate name. In reference to the mention of Troutbeck on p. 8-84, Mr. Edwards stated that Joel Spingarn’s wife was also active in the founding of NAACP (not just Joel) and should be mentioned. There is also no reference to who designed the house for the Spingarns; it may be possible to ask the Spingarn’s granddaughter to find out.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll requested additional photos of the landscapes. There is a reference on p. 8-84 to broad vistas across open fields; a photo there or some citation illustrating that would be helpful. The boundary justification notes that part of the boundary follows ridgelines; a photo view that defines that would be helpful. She requested that the consultant re-check the photo citations. On page 8-77, photo 21 is cited twice.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll requested that a data table be added to Section 7 that includes a correlation between addresses and parcel numbers; a data table would be helpful as a quick reference and is typical of the Connecticut format for nominations.

Mr. Wigren appreciated the discussion of the provincial quality of the architecture on p. 7-73. He mentioned that there is some connection to decorative arts as well; the term “fancy work” came into use at this time to refer to ornament. He also noted that the photo reference on p. 8-73 is off (no. 38).

Mr. Wigren commented on the reference to the lack of Gothic or Italianate style on p.7-74. In Connecticut there are examples of the Gothic Revival and Italianate styles in rural areas; a lack of those styles typically coincides with economic decline (agriculture declined and the focus was on industrial concerns). He asked if there are differences in the patterns of development or land use between states resulting from two different legal systems, especially in the twentieth century.

Dr. Feder stated that the nomination is well done. He noted that Criterion D is clear for the mill sites because there is “potential to yield information” and it is critical to this nomination. He noted that for a Connecticut nomination, he would add Criterion D and the SRB discussed precedent for recognizing visible sites that have not been excavated. Mr. Larson suggested some wording could be added to address the archaeological potential of the sites.

Mr. Herzan requested that the spelling of Lewis Mumford be corrected on p. 8-67.

A motion was made by Mr. Wigren, second by Ms. Saunders to recommend the Webutuck Valley Agricultural Historic District for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-8, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Mr. Barlow, Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Dr. Feder, Mr. Herzan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

2. Bridgeport Downtown Historic District Update (Criteria A and C, State level)

Ms. Scofield summarized that this nomination update combines the Bridgeport Downtown North and Bridgeport Downtown South districts that were listed under the 1987 MRA. The boundary is adjusted to expand into areas of urban renewal resources and detract in areas of losses. This nomination was reviewed by the SRB at the December 2, 2022 meeting and was held for vote in order to allow time to write a Criterion A statement for the full period of significance, 1841-1972. The nomination meets Criteria A and C at the state level for Architecture and Community Planning and Development. All other edits requested by the SRB in December have been completed.

Ms. Scofield stated that this project was initiated by an owner of property in the expanded area. The project was supported by the city. Notice of a public meeting and the December 2, 2022 SRB meeting was sent to all property owners of record, the City, local Historic District Commission,

Bridgeport History Center, U.S. General Services Administration, Amtrak, State of Connecticut (courthouse properties), and the Downtown Special Services District in October, 2022. A community meeting was held on October 26, 2022. Digital notice was sent regarding the continuance of the SRB review on June 15, 2023. A total of four letters were received from property owners in response to the nomination, including two in support, one opposed, and one from the General Services Administration objecting to the categorization of 915 Lafayette Street as a contributing property.

Mr. Edwards invited public comments.

Beth Savage introduced herself as the Director for the Center for Historic Buildings and Federal Preservation Officer for the General Services Administration (GSA). The GSA is not in opposition to the historic district. She stated that GSA appreciates the consideration of their comments [about the McMahon Courthouse] that were given at the December meeting and wants to expound upon those comments. She acknowledged that it is often not the SRB's purview to discuss the individual contributions of buildings in such a large district. Ms. Savage noted that urban renewal is a significant phenomenon, and she thinks nomination upgrades like this need to happen across the country. The GSA has 515 historic properties under their control. GSA has a nationwide context for modernism and 40% of the properties in their inventory date from this era. Ms. Savage stated that the National Park Service has characterized the GSA as the federal agency with the most proactive nomination and evaluation program. GSA looks at properties for multiple levels of significance and looked at the potential eligibility of this property [McMahon Courthouse] individually and as a resource in a potential district. GSA reached a concurrent determination of non-eligibility with SHPO, individually and as a contributing property to a future district. GSA has been evaluating properties in a national context of urban renewal significance for at least the last 10 years. GSA requests further consideration of the building as non-contributing. This is not a substantive issue for the nomination. GSA struggles with the predictability of National Register evaluations; they need to be able to plan when concurrent eligibility determinations are made.

Mr. Edwards requested SRB comments.

Mr. Barlow requested a mention of the use of plazas and open space to set off the buildings, especially over parking garages, be added to the narrative on modernism. He noted that Paul Friedberg, a pioneer of modernism in landscape architecture, is noted as associated with the design of 1130 Broad Street and asked that a paragraph about Friedberg's significance be added. He often collaborated with the modernist architects. Mr. Barlow stated that he was happy to see the mention of Constantino Nivola.

Dr. Bucki commented that the nomination skipped the WWI era. Her book [*Bridgeport's Socialist New Deal, 1915-1936*] has information on that. It sets up the 20th century dynamic of Bridgeport as an important industrial concern. Everything that is built around the city center contributed to the development of the banks, etc. She asked for a paragraph on the WWI time period to be added to the nomination. The narrative is otherwise well laid out. Dr. Bucki commented that she is still struggling with the modernism trend in urban renewal, which decimated parts of downtown.

Mr. Edwards commented that there is no assessment of what building stock was lost in the urban renewal effort. James Marston Fitch at Columbia in the early 1970s noted that a city without its

buildings is like a mind without its memory. It is important to document what disappeared during the enthusiasm to spend federal money and demolish sections of the city. Mr. Edwards observed that during the urban renewal period, buildings were not necessarily designed conceptually or with a sense of design. Architects often used diagrams of functions, then turned to large indexes of available materials such as plate glass and aluminum windows. The results of that are fascinating; it was not really architecture, but more an exercise of building.

Ms. Dyer-Carroll stated that the organization of the nomination is much improved from the December draft. She noted that this will set a precedent for future reevaluations. The mapping and photographs are now clear.

The SRB discussed the format of photo captions.

Mr. Herzan stated that the nomination is an excellent example of how to sort information for nomination updates.

Mr. Wigren observed that this was a difficult nomination update to prepare. He commented that the information in the nomination is not well digested. The chronology jumps around and relevance in some places is not clear. The commerce and community development would benefit from having periods defined. The architecture and urban renewal section don't identify what work is undertaken as part of the urban renewal program vs. private entities. Mr. Wigren offered to help with the final editing and organization of the narrative.

A motion was made by Mr. Herzan, second by Dr. Bucki to recommend the Bridgeport Downtown Historic District Update for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (Y-7, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Dr. Feder, Mr. Herzan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

B. Resolution for Rudy J. Favretti

Ms. Scofield read the following resolution.

RESOLUTION HONORING MR. RUDY J. FAVRETTI (1932-2023) FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

WHEREAS, Rudy J. Favretti, was an esteemed landscape architect who shaped the field of landscape design history, helped establish the concept of historic settings as significant resources, and set standards for the restoration of historic gardens; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Favretti's life experiences began in Connecticut as the child of Italian immigrants and with exposure to skilled carpentry and farming; and

WHEREAS, he earned a Bachelor of Science in horticulture from the University of Connecticut, a Master of Science in ornamental horticulture from Cornell University, and a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture from the University of Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Favretti began his career as an Extension Garden Specialist at the University of Connecticut and subsequently established the country's first nationally accredited academic program devoted to historic landscapes during his 33-year tenure as a professor there; and

WHEREAS, he completed around 600 individual and collaborative design, master planning and preservation projects that resulted in the restoration and rehabilitation of a wide range of significant historic landscapes during a 50-year period of private practice; and

WHEREAS, he restored hundreds of gardens throughout the U.S. and Europe including many nationally significant historic landscapes at Old Sturbridge Village, Monticello, Mount Vernon, Montpelier, Strawberry Banke, the Emily Dickinson house, Bartram's Gardens, the Nathaniel Russell house, Shelburne Farms, and Spanish Point; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Favretti restored numerous landscapes in Connecticut including those at Roseland Cottage, in Woodstock; the Jonathan Trumbull house, in Lebanon; the Governor's Mansion, in Hartford; and the Captain Nathaniel B. Palmer house, in Stonington; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Favretti published more than 20 books for professional and general audiences, some of them written in partnership with his wife, Joy Putman Favretti, including some of the first how-to manuals for the treatment and management of historic sites, and titles such as *New England Colonial Gardens* (1964), *Colonial Gardens* (1972), *Highlights of Connecticut Agriculture* (1976), *For Every House a Garden* (1977), and *Landscapes and Gardens for Historic Buildings* (1979), and *Jacob Weidenmann: Pioneer Landscape Architect* (2007); and

WHEREAS, his remarkable collection of plans, drawings, client files and more than 4,000 photographs are filed in the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Gardens; and

WHEREAS, he won an ASLA Merit Award for the Re-creation of the garden terrace and grove at Monticello in 1984, was inducted into the American Antiquarian Society in 1987, received The Garden Club of America's Historic Preservation Medal in 1990, became a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1992, received the Janet Jainschigg Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation in 2008; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Favretti was recognized by The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) as a Pioneer of Landscape Design, TCLF's list of people who have shaped the environments in which we live; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Favretti served on the State Historic Preservation Review Board for 29 years from 1989 until 2018; and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it

RESOLVED, that the members of the State Historic Preservation Review Board, meeting in Hartford on June 16, 2023, go on record as recognizing Mr. Favretti for his exceptional service to the State of Connecticut, its historic landscape, and its citizens; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution is recorded in our minutes.

The SRB voted to accept this resolution (Y-7, N-0, Abstained-0).

Board members voting yes: Dr. Bucki, Ms. Dyer-Carroll, Mr. Edwards, Dr. Feder, Mr. Herzan, Ms. Saunders, Mr. Wigren

V. Discussion

A. Preliminary Eligibility Reviews

Ms. Scofield requested SRB feedback regarding the National Register eligibility of two properties. These are brought to the SRB when there is a borderline case for eligibility. These reviews are for guidance purposes and are non-voting items.

1. William Begg Building, Waterbury

Ms. Scofield introduced David Lewis of PAL is a consultant who is researching the eligibility of the property. She showed a PowerPoint presentation. The building is located on Bank Street in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Waterbury. It was constructed in 1972, and the design is attributed to local architects Cohen & D'Oliviera, based on a drawing for the building. It was originally built for low-income elderly housing. The SHPO has been looking at a lot of 1970s resources including housing and a hotel; staff is open to National Register listing for this time period. Many have been evaluated as not eligible because they are altered, or no significant designs or Criterion A contexts were identified. The Begg Building is typical design for the 1970s but is notably intact; potential under Criterion A is still being researched. There is no notable landscape design element.

Mr. Edwards suggested researching whether this property was recognized by the CT AIA. That should always be checked for this time period. There were 5 or 6 architectural magazines published monthly; every office sus Mr. Cohen would likely be regarded as a distinguished architect in Waterbury. He designed a social club in Waterbury in the 1960s, which was a distinguished project.

Mr. Wigren stated that one tactic would be to study the history of the Waterbury Housing program in the 1960s and 1970s; he asked if the housing authority considered this one of their fine projects, and whether it was it typical or atypical of what was being done.

Mr. Edwards noted that every architectural office subscribed to national publications. Public housing projects were often featured in those. You could easily find out what was being published.

Mr. Cohen would have known what was being published and could have been influenced by it. Mr. Wigren added that CT AIA had its own publication.

Dr. Bucki asked if there has been a survey of public housing projects in the state. There is a national significance to some of them, but they're very ordinary. Many of them have been torn down. It would be nice to know how many there were throughout the state.

Mr. Wigren asked who lives in these and how were they chosen? He referenced the waiting period for gaining access to housing.

Ms. Scofield responded that there is not a great statewide picture yet. One context has been done for Hartford. Outside of New Haven, Connecticut is not always the most pivotal location for pioneering new ideas in public housing. There is common architecture and architecture that has been altered. Also, if a property is not eligible for design, you need a strong Criterion A argument. So far, data on the actual people living in these buildings is missing.

Mr. Herzan commented that he likes the architecture of the building. It is a good example at the local level. Its integrity is compelling for eligibility. Data on every housing project in CT may not be needed to evaluate it; social history could enrich it. Mr. Herzan suggested studying what models the designer had to copy. Look at Walter Gropius and student housing; this building has a mid-century modernist streak. It has integrity, is well-proportioned, and is a thoughtfully designed building.

Mr. Lewis responded to comments about the CT AIA. Andrew Cohen was the secretary of that branch for some time. Cohen & D'Oliviera designed a bank branch in Watertown and that design was published in the CT AIA journal.

Mr. Edwards stated that we should be aware that post-WWII cities adopted building regulations, based on state versions of national regulations. If you look at the plan of this building, how simple it is with a corridor stretching from exit stair to exit stair, with an elevator in the middle so it is equidistant from each side, this is reflective of code requirements. The world gets tightly controlled suddenly in terms of how things get built.

The SRB expressed that the William Begg building has potential for National Register listing.

2. Donald Grant Mitchell House, New Haven

Ms. Scofield introduced Donald Grant Mitchell House in the Edgewood neighborhood of New Haven. It is listed in the State Register as part of the Edgewood Historic District. In this case, the integrity of the building is a potential issue for National Register listing. It has excellent significance and association with a well-known figure, but the setting is altered, and the floor plan has been cut up into apartments. Ms. Scofield introduced Barbara Lamb, who gave a PowerPoint presentation.

2022 marked the 200th anniversary of Donald Grant Mitchell's birth. He was an internationally known author, also worked as a diplomat, and was influential in the development of the New Haven public parks system. He designed this house himself in a picturesque style but worked in

coordination with David R. Brown of Brown & Van Buren. This was the main house on his 200-acre farm. There is influence of Stick and Eastlake styles. Much of the stone came from the property; Mitchell described wanting to use local materials for a tenant farmer's house (extant nearby). Mitchell's scrapbooks from European Tours include images of country houses.

Ms. Lamb described alterations and intact features on the interior. The woodwork is there but has been painted. Portions of the floor plan have been closed off.

Mr. Edwards asked if the alterations are reversible. Ms. Scofield responded that most features are there, while some doors are cut off. Mr. Wigren added that most of the alterations are additions or insertions.

Ms. Lamb described the original setting of the farm and noted that all of the open views are gone. The farm was subdivided and developed with residences. Periodicals from 1906 noted changes in the landscape surrounding the property. There are three houses in the area that were associated with the farm. Historic materials are intact in terms of the stonework and brickwork. The hardware was likely locally sourced. The chimneys are both brick and stone; Mitchell liked the combination of materials. In terms of workmanship, this is meant to be a farmhouse; the design is not ostentatious. The feeling is there, with the little balconies and many fireplaces.

Ms. Scofield requested the SRB's assessment because of the cutting up of the interior. The significance of Donald Grant Mitchell and his association with this property is well known and not an issue for the National Register.

Mr. Wigren stated that he is not concerned about the division of the apartments because it seems like it is mostly additions rather than subtractions. Pending confirmation that that fabric is there, that doesn't bother him. The integrity question that is more severe is the loss of the landscape. This piece of land was Mitchell's muse to some degree, and he wrote about it. There is almost total loss of the landscape around the house. A case could be made for Mitchell for his other work being important.

Mr. Edwards commented that there is so much photo documentation of what the landscape is like. The Mark Twain house has also lost landscape around it. He noted that architecturally the building is curious, and it is significant for association for Mitchell.

Dr. Bucki noted that she is impressed with the stonework and brickwork. She referenced the elevated railroad in Bridgeport and the stonework done by Italian masons; Mr. Wigren referenced that pink roses planted along the railroad line were purportedly planted by Mitchell to make the ride scenic.

Mr. Herzan commented that the resource is still a valuable vehicle to recognize Mitchell's life and career. The reshaping of the setting started to happen during Mitchell's time; that helps tell the story of Mitchell's career and impact. He stated that there is enough there to tell the story and thinks it is eligible for listing despite the alterations and landscape reductions.

Mr. Wigren added that the loss of landscape is the biggest hurdle to address in a nomination.

The SRB expressed support for the property's National Register eligibility.

VI. New Business

No new business was discussed.

VII. SHPO Staff Report

Ms. Scofield announced that SHPO's new statewide geospatial system, called ConnCRIS, is now available at <https://conncris.ct.gov>. A full launch of the system, including log-in access to view PDFs is coming soon. She also stated that the National Park Service has reappointed their Advisory Board and the approval of the Barnum National Historic Landmark designation is anticipated in August, 2023.

Mr. Kinney provided an overview of recent state legislation. A working group involving SHPO will study ways to clarify SHPO reviews under the Connecticut Environmental Policy Act. SHPO received funding to develop a Historic Preservation Toolkit. A modification to the Homeowners Tax Credit program will take effect in January 2024, to allow homeowners to take the credit on their income tax. SHPO is beginning work on the statewide preservation plan for 2024-2029.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Saunders, second by Dr. Bucki to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:50 a.m.