Saving a Historic Streetscape

Our Campaign to Save 116 and 130 Bank Street

For the past few months, New London Landmarks’ staff and volunteers have put in countless hours fighting the proposed demolitions of two historic buildings, 116 and 130 Bank Street, in downtown New London. Not only are these buildings important individually, but together they are part of a streetscape that embodies New London’s post-colonial and nineteenth century maritime heritage.

What goes into a campaign like this?

We began by enlisting the help of Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, which provided us with a structural engineer’s report stating that 130 Bank Street is repairable, architectural renderings of a concept for the rehabilitation of both buildings, and a budget showing how this concept could result in a 5% return on investment over fifteen years. This allowed us to demonstrate that a feasible, prudent alternative to demolition exists.

Concurrently, our researchers began digging into the buildings’ histories. 130 Bank Street was built in 1828 and had been the home of a prominent sea captain. 116 Bank Street is even older: built in the late 1780’s, it may have been the first building on Bank Street constructed after Benedict Arnold torched the city in 1781. Originally the home of a baker who had supplied bread to the Continental Army, it later became a sailors’ boarding house, then a mission.

With this information and the fact that both buildings are listed as contributing resources to the Downtown New London national historic district, we were able to win 180-day demolition delays for both buildings from New London’s Historic District Commission. This delay gave us time to demonstrate that we have public support for the preservation of both buildings.

We started a petition drive. Once we had an impressive number of signatures, we issued a press release and scheduled a meeting with The Day’s editorial board. We also reached out to municipal leaders. We are tremendously grateful to The Day for their thoughtful coverage of the issue, to New London Mayor Michael Passero for his letter of support, and to the New London City Council for their unanimous passage of a resolution calling for State intervention to prevent the demolitions. (Cont’d, pg. 2.)
Our work pays off

On July 5th, we testified in front of the State Historic Preservation Council and presented them with 1518 petition signatures, twenty-seven letters of support, Mayor Passero’s letter, and the City Council’s resolution. Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation demonstrated that the buildings were repairable and potentially profitable. Months of work paid off when the Council voted unanimously to recommend intervention by the State Attorney General to prevent the demolitions.

Since then, we’ve begun to speak with potential developers about the two buildings, although we realize that any sale would ultimately be up to the property owner. We are also pursuing several avenues to prevent water from penetrating and damaging 130 Bank Street, where windows have been open since late spring, and strengthening our case in anticipation of the Attorney General’s office agreeing to intercede.

Although this effort was spearheaded by New London Landmarks, we could not have gotten this far without the community’s wholehearted support. Not only do we feel we have a good chance of preventing the demolitions of these buildings, but we are now working with the city to explore additional methods of protecting New London’s historic assets.

—Laura Natusch, Executive Director

How could these buildings be rehabilitated? Here’s one concept by David Gosling of Crosskey Architects which includes the addition of a townhouse apartment between the two buildings.
Rose Oliveira Joins Board of Directors

New London Landmarks’ Board of Directors welcomed its newest member, Rose Oliveira, in March.

Rose joined our board because, she says, New London Landmarks is an organization that not only makes history visible, but also takes an active role in historic preservation.

She believes that communities without historic preservation organizations are at a disadvantage when buildings become endangered. For example, she says, before a historic theater in Gardner, Massachusetts was recently demolished, many people opposed the demolition but lacked an organization able to spearhead a preservation effort. “It’s really special to have New London Landmarks,” she says. “People that are proactive, people that care… that network is invaluable.”

Rose grew up in Naugatuck, Connecticut, an old industrial city where people tried unsuccessfully to save their historic mills. Even as a child, she says, she was sad to see the mills replaced by generic supermarkets and liquor stores. Reflecting on those losses, she says, “What makes a town special are places that accumulate stories over time.”

She moved to New London in 2016 when she began working at Connecticut College as the Linda Lear Special Collections Librarian, a position that combines her information technology skills with her passion for environmental issues.

"New London charms people and pulls them in," she says. "Just walking along the streets, you can feel that it’s steeped in history." She is also attracted to New London’s arts, its diversity, and its location on the water. “So many people care about this town. Some towns feel like they’re dying, but New London feels very alive.”

In addition to serving on NL Landmarks’ program committee, Rose is developing an inventory of our historic materials (street files, studies, neighborhood histories, etc.) so that people who are interested in their building’s history or in preservation projects are more aware of all the resources we offer. She plans to upload the first resource descriptions onto our website early this fall.

Signed copies of local artist Mark Patnode’s book “Cultivating Illuminations” are now available for $20 at New London Landmark’s office at 49 Washington Street. Proceeds will help support the work we do. (Thanks, Mark!) Email director@newlondonlandmarks.org or call (860)442-0003 for more information.
Opponents to Old Saybrook to Kenyon Bypass Celebrate Victory, For Now

Preservationists celebrated a victory when the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released a Record of Decision on July 12th which largely omitted plans for a proposed high speed rail bypass from Old Saybrook to Kenyon, Rhode Island.

The bypass, which would have cut through historic districts, salt marshes and other historically and environmentally sensitive sites in southeastern Connecticut and southern Rhode Island, seemed like a foregone conclusion in early 2016 when academic Gregory Stroud first sat down and seriously read the plan. The window for public comment was narrow. The FRA had spent three years developing the plan without sufficiently involving affected municipalities. Although the concept made sense to planners living hundreds of miles away, it was potentially disastrous for people living in the communities through which the new tracks would pass.

So Stroud, who with the help of Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation co-founded the nonprofit SE-Coast with Robin Breeding, Diane Mallory in order to spearhead opposition to the bypass, wrote letters and press releases, held informational meetings and rallies, and built a coalition which included activists and elected officials throughout Connecticut and Rhode Island. This united and sustained opposition resulted in what Stroud calls “an unprecedented change to a federal project of this type and scope.”

However, Stroud warns, plans for a similar bypass could still reappear. The FRA’s Record of Decision calls for a capacity study to identify both “on and off-corridor infrastructure” in order to meet the FRA’s goals of increased speed, resiliency and redundancy.

Stroud, who is now Director of Special Projects for Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, urges people who opposed the bypass to remain engaged and united as Connecticut and Rhode Island explore ways to meet federally mandated improvements to the Northeast Corridor. He hopes stakeholders will press for an open and inclusive process, and that together they’ll find a solution that addresses everyone’s concerns.

“When Old Lyme and New London find common ground, the entire region is so much better off,” says Stroud. “Let’s hope that high-speed rail is only the first of many such collaborations between communities across the region. And I’d say the same about SE-Coast, New London Landmarks and the Connecticut Trust.”

—Laura Natusch, Executive Director

SECoast volunteers at the first rally against the Kenyon to Old Saybrook Bypass, May 1, 2016
Our Spring/Summer Programs

- We hosted a free Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit workshop led by the State Historic Preservation Office.
- Volunteer Bill Culotta offered our first annual Jane’s Walk, honoring the life and work of Jane Jacobs with a tour of downtown New London, focusing on the businesses which thrived in the late 1950’s through the early 1970’s.
- Board members Don Presley and Tom Couser led Whaling City Walking Tours of Bank Street, highlighting fifteen different Bank Street buildings’ ties to the whaling industry.
- Intern Alfredo Gutierrez designed a walking tour of the Hempstead Historic District which he presented to Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School students.

We thank Carl Franklin, organizer of the Keto Festival, and Hannah Gant of Spark Makerspace for inviting us to offer walking tours as part of their downtown events.

From the Executive Director

It’s an honor and a pleasure to take over as executive director of New London Landmarks.

It’s an honor because over the past forty-one years, this organization has had an enormous impact on New London. We saved Union Station, nominated historic districts, helped set into motion improvements to Riverside Park and Hodges Square Village, assisted City Flats and changed the way people think about and value New London’s historic resources.

It’s a pleasure not only because this work aligns with my values, but also because it enables me to collaborate with our knowledgeable, passionate and hard-working directors and volunteers. They inspire me every day. I’m also grateful to outgoing executive director Constance Kristofik, who worked hard to make this transition as seamless as possible.

I’m particularly excited to be here as we rally to save 116 and 130 Bank Street. This campaign is personal to me, as my husband and I lived in 130 Bank Street when we first moved to New London over fifteen years ago.

This campaign also highlights the importance of New London Landmarks. It goes right to the heart of our mission—and the heart of why I’m happy to be here.

Laura Natusch
Three Creative Placemaking workshops held at the new Winthrop Magnet School
Wednesday, September 19:
7:00—9:00 pm.
Led by UConn’s Landscape Architects, Peter Miniutti A.S.L.A. and Madeline Schad. This is the first of several planned workshops to take place through the winter to learn from neighbors and friends of Riverside Park what they would like to see in the park and take these ideas to develop a Master Plan for Riverside Park.

Wednesday, October 17:
7:00—9:00 pm.
Led by Art Costa and Jerry Sinnamon, the purpose of this community meeting is to discuss the information garnered from surveys centered around assets in the Hodges Square business community. In this open forum/workshop with residents, businesses and entrepreneurs interested in Northeastern New London, we will review a set of preliminary options with the goal of creating a sustainable residential, commercial, educational, and recreational community. Your ideas and comments in these workshops are essential to achieving our goals for this Creative Placemaking Project.

Wednesday, November 28:
7:00—9:00 pm.
Following up on ideas collected from the September Workshop, Peter Miniutti and Madeline Schad will explore more specific ideas for the Park and the Neighborhood. The workshop will begin plotting new uses on large maps of the park and neighborhood. These Workshops will continue through the spring of 2013 to create the Master Plan for Riverside Park and the Historic Neighborhood.

Upcoming Events

**Cottage to Castle:**
**Neptune Park Home Tour**
Saturday, October 7, 2017
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Tour four homes in the Neptune Park area, including 11 Elliot Avenue, a.k.a. The Castle! The tour will culminate with a reception with light refreshments.
$25 for current members;
$35 for non-members includes a year’s membership.
There will also be an opportunity to order plaques for the holidays at a special reduced price.

**Candidates’ Forum**
Wednesday, October 18, 2017
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Public Library of New London Community Room
63 Huntington Avenue, New London
Free
Municipal elections are coming up! Meet the candidates for New London City Council and hear what they have to say about preservation and development of New London.

**Holiday Church Tour (tentative)**
Saturday, December 30, 2017
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Meet at New London Landmarks
49 Washington Street, New London
$15 admission / $10 members
Back by popular demand! Musical performances included at each venue. More details to come.

**This Old Home Show**
**featuring The Fabulous Beekman Boys**
Saturday, April 7, 2017
9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Ocean Beach Park
98 Neptune Avenue, New London
$10 admission
Free parking
Exhibitors and presentations by experts from New England including windows, paint, historic tax credits and more!
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**Historic Plaque Application**

If your New London home/building is at least 50 years old, it may qualify to receive an historic marker listing its date and original owner. Our plaque research aids in neighborhood preservation efforts, and the plaques help identify New London as a historic city. Plaques make great gifts!

Our volunteers title researchers study land, tax and water records, historic maps, and city directories to establish your building's first owner and date of its construction.

Our researchers welcome any oral history or copies of old documents relating to your building you may have. Please allow approximately two months for completion of the research and delivery of the durable, hand-lettered, sealed, hardwood plaque.

**Plaque Address**

**Name**

**Address**

**Day Phone**

**E-mail address**

**Legal Owner (if different)**

**Approximate Date Purchased by Current Owner**

**Approximate Age of Property**

**Additional Information:**

**Membership Status: Yes ☐ No ☐**

**Price of Plaque:**

- $250.00 Non-member
- $235.00 Members
- $100.00 Replacement Plaque

A non-refundable deposit of $100.00 is required with this application. Balance is due upon completion.

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**Historic Plaques Completed in 2017**

- J. Taylor Douglas House (1914) at 36 Bellevue Place
- David Bishop House (1858) at 3 Mountain Avenue
- David Bishop House (1858) at 7 Mountain Avenue
- John & Marie Prendergast House (1902) at 113 Shaw Street
- Isabel N. Chapman House (1914) at 917 Ocean Avenue
- Eaton & Wilson, Inc. House (1938) at 208 Bank Street (Restoration Award)
- Josiah Rogers House (c. 1844) at 103 Truman Street
- Nettie Ruddy House (1905) at 322 Montauk Avenue
- Thomas Holmstrom House (1835) at 39 Shaw Street
- Henry Rogers House (c. 1846) at 15 Williams Street
- Mary J. Lewis House (1887) at 14 Hempstead Court
- Elisha N. Newbury House (1894) at 21 Alger Place

If you have a Landmarks Whale Plaque on your home and it is fading, chipping or wearing away, we can restore it for a fee of $100.00. The program began in 1985 so some of these plaques have been out in the weather for many years. Let us know if they need restoration!

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**Attorney Daryl Justin Finizio at his home office at 3 Mountain Avenue, with Executive Director Laura Natusch and President Laura Nadelburg.**
Thank You to Our Business Members!

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- Contributor $75
- Patron $100
- President’s Circle $500

Business Membership:
- Heritage Supporter $100
- Heritage Partner $200
- President’s Circle $500

www.newlondonlandmarks.org (Join/Give)

Thank You For Your Support!