



# The Preservationist

September 2007

## A Survey of Neptune Park, Landmarks 2006-7 Archival Project

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Cities all over the country struggle to define themselves as they are today—and—discover how they got to where they are today. To plan future growth and development, one needs to understand the history of the community. A survey that pictures each house and building in a defined neighborhood at a specific moment in time is one method of documenting an urban area. Adding information on the date of construction, the architectural style and current condition is another layer of meaning. Reviewing historic records of the area begins to complete the picture. As the area of inquiry expands neighborhood to neighborhood the city gains a fascinating understanding of itself and the inter-relationships and inter-connections of the city as a whole.

We began a survey of Neptune Park and Ocean Beach this winter, thanks to a grant from the Frank Loomis Palmer Fund. Archivist Kristin Havrilla Clarke is compiling the survey of every house in the area for the State Historic Preservation Office of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism. The earliest homes date to the first lot sales in 1907 and a few are still very much in their original condition, a few in the original families.



*Mott Avenue house*

In the beginning it was a real estate development scheme: purchase a large expanse of waterfront property, mostly undeveloped; sell a beautiful beach site to the City and have them develop a public beach; lay-out a housing development with significant deed restrictions to create an exclusive beach community; sell off the lots with the expectations of significant financial gain. Then encourage the construction of a trolley line from downtown to the beach so everyone can enjoy fresh air and entertainment.

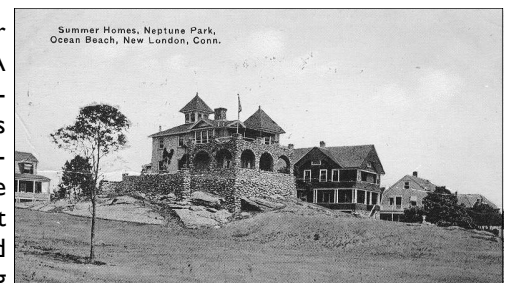
Well, in Neptune Park it worked. The developers required owners to build a house of “at least \$3,000” on waterfront property” and “\$2,500” on the inland lots. They are worth a lot more today! Many early buyers lived in downtown New London and Neptune Park was their summer home. Friends and relatives bought in and a diverse neighborhood developed.

Landmarks survey documents the neighborhood, and we invite you to come out on September 15 to Discover Neptune Park and Ocean Beach for yourselves.

## Discover Neptune Park on September 15 . . .

Nestled next to Ocean Beach is a tiny corner of America Past. Beach cottages and larger homes share the waterfront, preserve their historic integrity and maintain a lovely neighborhood of summer and year-round homes.

The community began when Governor Thomas Waller built a summer home at 11 Elliot Avenue in the 1890s. A few years later a group of New London businessmen, including Governor Waller, Jeremiah Cronin, and James Hislop purchased the Mott Farm and laid out a new community, marketed by the Post Hill Improvement Company. All property had deed restrictions stipulating the cost of homes, beach rights for all, and the size



*Governor Waller's house in an early Post Card*

and location of porches. These restrictions remain in effect today.

The house at the right is Jeremiah Cronin's summer home, still in the Cronin family many generations later. The original ground floor porch has been partly glassed in, but the upper porch, the “sleeping porch” still provides cool ocean breezes on a hot summer night.

Continued on page 4

## The Other Winslow Ames House

By Douglas Royalty

The **Winslow Ames House** is one of New London's great preservation successes. The little 1934 "house of tomorrow" at 130 Mohegan Avenue narrowly escaped demolition in 1989 and was later rehabilitated by its owner, Connecticut College. Today it's both a working office building and a treasured landmark. (photo at right)

But that's just half the story. Ames, the director of the Lyman Allyn Museum in the 1930s, had not one but two International Style prefabs erected on a plot of land near the Lyman Allyn. The other house, a small frameless steel cottage, isn't much to look at today, with its peeling paint



Winslow Ames House at left, "steel cottage" at right and below

and rusting walls, but when it was unveiled in late 1933 it stood as a gleaming vision of the future for modernists such as Ames.

The house at 130 Mohegan Avenue was designed and built by General Houses, Inc. (GH), a Chicago outfit that aimed to sell prefabricated homes "like Fords." GH's chief rival, New York-based American Houses, Inc., built the Winslow Ames House (out of asbestos cement panels) and had similar aspirations. In the end, neither

company's "machines for living" succeeded in the marketplace, but in the 1930s they — and Winslow Ames — were at the leading edge of the movement to "rationalize" the housing business.

"Together these two houses tell an amazing story about the modern faith in industrial production and its potential for improving life," says Abigail Van Slyck, the Dayton associate professor art history at Connecticut College. "The fact that Connecticut College has an example of each, sitting side by side, is nothing less than astonishing."

The steel house, a 21-by-37-foot box with an attached garage, has two bedrooms, one bath, an open living/dining/kitchen area, a fireplace, and several built-in storage units. It is similar in plan and construction to models GH displayed at the 1933-34 "Century of Progress" World's Fair in Chicago, though the addition of a pitched roof in the 1980s masks much of its International Style character.



## 100th Anniversary for the New London County Historical Society

The Annual Meeting of the New London County Historical Society celebrates 100 years in their home at the Shaw Mansion. Their Annual Meeting includes a gala dinner September 9, at the Port and Starboard Restaurant at Ocean Beach and will host guest speaker Eric Jay Dolin, author of *LEVIATHAN—The History of Whaling in America* to celebrate the occasion. Call the Shaw Mansion at 443-1209 for reservations and join NLCHS to commemorate this anniversary.

## Directors' Report

Sandra Kersten Chalk

### Basic Operational Support Grant

The Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism awarded New London Landmarks with a Basic Operational Support Grant, which will help NLL move ahead with many of the goals it set as part of the strategic planning process developed last winter during a full-day retreat at Connecticut College. These include programs that will promote interest in New London's historic buildings, neighborhoods and streetscapes.

The \$42,700 grant is matched by the all-important funding NLL raises through memberships, annual giving, fundraising projects and additional grants received from the Frank Loomis Palmer Fund. Among the projects planned for next year are:



Connecticut Commission  
on Culture & Tourism

### New Office Hours

The office will now be open five days a week from 9:00—1:00 and additional hours by appointment. The archival position has been expanded as well to continue the responsibility of maintaining records of historic and contemporary value to the preservation of New London history.

### Web Site (Coming Soon)

New London Landmarks has finally admitted that it needs a presence on the Internet, recognizing that people in the 21st century get information, do research and plan vacations via the World Wide Web. To that end, it is developing its own Web site that will provide information on the preservation efforts and educational programs undertaken by the organization over the last 30 years.

The site will contain pages outlining New London's history, its enduring relationship with maritime activities and information on all National Register Historic Districts and Individually Listed Sites. With links to local and regional sites, [www.newlondonlandmarks.org](http://www.newlondonlandmarks.org) will provide tourists and residents with a convenient way to discover New London!

### Design Review

It is time to take development in New London seriously. With our expanded office hours and administrative time, I hope to work with city departments and interested citizens to review existing regulations (there are not very many) and develop concepts for encouraging developers to high standards of design, building materials, site placement and building height. If any members would like to serve on the project, please call me at the Landmarks office.

We will be using the resources of previous excellent studies and recommendations including the 1989 R/UDAT Study, the 1991 Downtown Design Guidebook and the 2001 HyettPalma Study. Excellent work has been done through the years, and some recommendations have been followed, for instance, a redesign of the Parade area has been recommended by each of these studies.

### Staff Changes at NLL

Kristin Havrilla Clarke, our part-time Archivist, is leaving for a new job as Assistant to Planning Director in Ledyard. We have been very lucky to have Kristin's talent available while she completed her Masters Degree in Urban Planning at NYU and wish her good fortune in her new position.

Trisha Royston who is the Librarian and Archivist for the New London County Historical Society will join NLL as Archivist. In addition to her archival experience, Trisha's work with the two organizations will bring a needed coordination to the historic records maintained by the two organizations.

### Connecticut State Demolition Ordinance

The State Legislature recently passed a new Demolition Delay Ordinance, increasing the allowable time to prevent demolition of an historic or culturally significant building from 90 days to 180 days. This new legislation will take effect October 1, 2007.

This change will allow New London to adopt a similar change in the City Ordinance. NLL will work with the Historic District Commission to make this revision to New London's Ordinance as quickly as possible.

## Saved from Demolition !

New London Landmarks thanks and congratulates Mitchell College and President Dr. Mary Ellen Jukoski for their decision to save the 1890s Caretaker's cottage. The small house was part of the original Alfred Mitchell estate and adds historic character to the campus as it moves forward with a comprehensive Master Plan.

In the midst of repairs today, the house will be adaptively reused as a Visitors Center and mail room, providing visitors with an immediate "sense of place" as they enter the campus. This is the first phase of their plans to "... enhance not only our physical plant, but also accentuate the scenic aspects of this beautiful waterfront property," according to Jack Scott, trustee and chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee.





## New & Renewing Members 4/25/07—9/1/07

Membership in New London Landmarks is a visible way of supporting Landmarks mission “. . . to promote the preservation and development of the entire urban environment of New London, Connecticut, including significant individual structures, streetscapes, neighborhoods and open spaces.”

Your memberships are more important than ever this year as we address fascinating issues of development throughout New London, the ever-increasing costs of maintaining and restoring historic homes and buildings, and the developing new urbanist ideas of green and sustainable development. All membership funds are now matched by the Basic Operational Support grant—this doubles your contribution!

While we work to preserve the historic fabric of our communities, Landmarks believes we must also look to the future. New development should maintain high standards of design and building fabric. One hundred years from now we hope our grandchildren will be proud of early 21st century development in New London.

### INDIVIDUAL

Judith Cammarata  
Jonathan Duncklee  
Catherine Fosnot  
Marilyn Graham  
Carol Nelson  
Suzanne Risley  
Scott Sawyer  
Mariae Spencer  
Sherburne Stidfole  
Barbara Zabel

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Nathan & Patricia Belcher  
Thomas & Ann Carrol, Jr.  
Barbara Dixon  
Linda & Tom English  
Helen & Howard Falk  
John & Anne Hunziker  
George Vinick & Margaret Saxe  
Ernest & Gabriella Schlesinger  
Russ & Frances Vocalina

### CONTRIBUTOR

Fuzzy Gipstein  
Ben Martin

### PATRON

Jerry Brophy  
Elizabeth Enders  
Heather & Rick Grigsby  
Peter Moore  
C. William & Donna Stamm

### CORPORATE

Bruce Baratz  
Lori Hopkins, Realtor

Our Annual Membership drive begins at our Annual Meeting in February. Remember our membership year is April 1 through March 31. Benefits of membership include receiving copies of *The Preservationist*, postcards and mailings about special events and, most importantly, support for our on-going work to preserve and protect New London's historic urban landscape.

We are always happy to welcome new members to join in our preservation efforts for New London.

**Individual: \$25    Family: \$35    Contributor: \$50 - \$75    Patron: \$100 & above    Corporate: \$200**

## Discover Neptune Park & Ocean Beach

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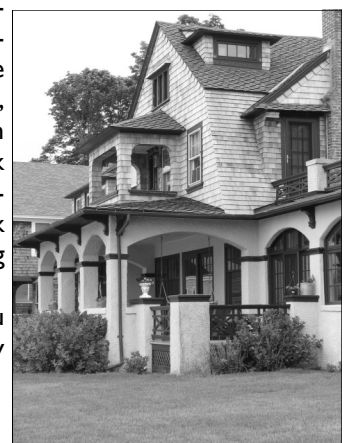
Homes along the beach at Neptune Park

The Nature Walk along the dunes.

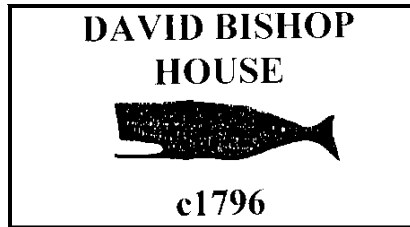


From the beach or the street, the homes in Neptune Park are varied in architectural style, date of construction and interior details, yet a uniformity remains in this small neighborhood.

September 15 offers the opportunity to stroll the streets of Neptune Park, play miniature golf on the historic “Spouting Whale” course, walk the surf or boardwalk at Ocean Beach, and enjoy the Nature Walk along the dunes to the beautiful observation deck overlooking Long Island Sound. On a clear day you can see all the way to Orient Point!



## Historic Plaque Application



If your New London home/building is a least 50 years old it may qualify to receive an historic marker listing its date and original owner. The information gathered in this process aids in neighborhood preservation efforts.

Our volunteer title researchers study land, tax and water records, historic maps and city directories to establish your building's first owner and date of its estimated construction. The researchers also welcome any oral history or copies of old documents relating to your building that you may have. Allow at least 16 - 20 weeks for completion of the research and delivery of the durable, hand-lettered and 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: \$200.00 non-member. \$175.00 members.

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

### Historic Plaques Completed:

**A. George Griffin**  
1901  
44 Center Street

**Wallace D. Hempstead**  
1888  
21 Garfield Avenue

**Patrick W. Farrell**  
1892  
49 Belden Street

## Personal Property: Rights and Responsibility

*"... Every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation, every possession, a duty."*

- John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

The right of property ownership has been a hot topic in New London over the past 10 years because of the eminent domain and development issues in Fort Trumbull that were brought to the front pages of newspapers across the country. Another issue, which has recently garnered attention locally is a property-owner's responsibility to the greater community.

There are plenty of reasons for a property to be well-maintained, one of which is that a home or other building is a major economic investment. It only makes sense that an owner takes care of that investment. That house or building, however, is also part of a larger community. It is surrounded by neighbors who have an equal economic concern for their properties. Thus, the maintenance of each and every building is essential to the economic well-being of the larger community, town or city. Property values go up in a well-kept neighborhood and go down when the neighborhood or street has unpainted or broken-down homes and overgrown lawns.



*How does the derelict state in the front of of this house affect its neighbors? While the front is unkempt and derelict, the back yard is beautifully landscaped and maintained. Owners have applied for demolition of the house, citing excessive costs of repair.*

temporary life style, owners of historic homes often face high expenses. A change in the tax code recognizing these costs, especially for historic homes in historic districts could significantly encourage homeowners to make the necessary investments that improve exterior appearance and create prosperous-looking streetscapes throughout New London.

Interestingly, the house above and the Cronin building, left, (on the NLL Endangered List) on State Street were built for Jeremiah D. Cronin, a prominent New London businessman, one of the original promoters of Neptune Park and a popular local politician. His Victorian home at 22 Nathan Hale Street was a winter residence, a house in Neptune Park, his summer home. He hired George Warren Cole to design the Cronin Building. An architect for the architectural firm of Shepley, Rutan and Collidge, H.H. Richardson's successor firm. The building reflects many design motifs popularized by Richardson in the late 19th century.

Historic buildings reflect on who we were—and—who we are today. New London's rich architectural heritage should be treasured and protected. Allowed to fall into disrepair, negatively affecting neighboring buildings and the streetscape, indicates a careless disregard for the city of New London, its long history, and neighborhood property values.

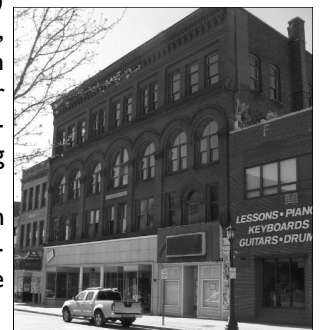
Personal responsibility for property is a deep and important aspect of ownership. Only the property owner can maintain the property. The City has very limited options when dealing with property that is not well-maintained. Building codes must be enforced but many maintenance problems are not included in these codes.

It is really a matter of good citizenship.



*What impression does this house, located at a prominent corner of downtown — make on people traveling through the city?*

One problem is the tax code. Local property taxes penalize owners for high quality maintenance of exterior painting and landscaping. Owners of historic homes have high maintenance costs not associated with newer homes. Features such as towers, turrets, nonstandard-size windows and doors, porches and balconies, ornamentation, wood siding and inadequate insulation are high-maintenance items. In order to maintain both the aesthetic appearance and con-



*The Cronin building has been deteriorating for years under several owners. What is the economic effect on the Historic Waterfront District to have such a prominent building empty and in a state of disrepair?*



## About New London . . . Things are happening, but not always visible . . .

### Parade Plaza

It's all happening on drawing boards and in engineering conferences, but from what I'm hearing we can look forward to the day when all is revealed, when the painstaking engineering problems have been solved and final plans are available to the public. It will be soon. Gregg Wies & Gardner are responsible for making it work, filling as nearly as possible the ideas developed in the forums last spring. Some ideas put forward are simply not possible, for instance, two-way traffic on Water Street is not feasible, but as planning has developed, there is room for safe, comfortable pedestrian movement and the automobile will still be able to move through the area easily.

Krent / Paffett / Carney Inc. of Boston has been hired to enhance the plans with carefully thought through historic displays and references. They have consulted with Landmarks, the New London County Historic Society, the New London Maritime Museum, Lyman Allyn Museum and the Coast Guard Museum to develop an understanding of New London's significant history and relationship with maritime activities. Displays are in the design stage to provide glimpses of New London history, planned to encourage residents and visitors to do their own exploration in surrounding historic societies and museums to discover more — and see more of New London's fine architecture, shops and restaurants.

### The Pink House



You can't see it now, but, it's on the move, piece-by-piece from the hillside overlooking Fort Trumbull and the Thames River to Franklin Street in the Hempstead Street Historic District.

The foundation shown at the right is the site of a house that burned about 25 years ago. Avner Gregory constructed an English Sunken Garden in the foundation and it will now be a new location for the "Pink House."



### Green Street

Slowly...but surely...things they are a'changin'. While we haven't devoted much space to this story in recent issues of *The Preservationist*, it's always worth a trip around the corner to see how Green Street is being transformed: this historic home, one of the oldest in New London, is becoming the crown jewel of the street. There's also a new shoe store and always a new opening at the Golden Street Gallery.

As this transformation takes place, perhaps the City of New London can find funding to repave the street, replace signage and improve the signage, all of which will create a whole new area of economic development in the Historic Waterfront District.



### Henry Hobson Richardson — Exhibit at Union Station, New London , August 28—September 4

The exhibit explores the fascinating life of Henry Hobson Richardson and provides a detailed look at his architectural style that became known as Richardson Romanesque. His work greatly influenced later American architects including Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

New London has a number of examples of Richardson's work—Union Station being the most significant. The goal of the exhibit is to excite an interest in historic architecture and help patrons understand how architecture affects their own experience in beautifully designed buildings.

The full color, lavishly illustrated, exhibit is mounted on 4 folding display panels. An additional hands-on set of "Richardson Building Blocks" allows interested patrons of any age to arrange blocks in their own Richardson Library style.

The exhibit will tour local libraries this fall, see the schedule on the Calendar page.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Henry Hobson Richardson Exhibit**

#### **SCHEDULE OF EXHIBITS:**

September 4—30 - Groton Public Library,  
52 Rt. 117, Groton, CT  
October 1—20 - Public Library of New London,  
63 Huntington St., New London, CT  
October 21—November 17 - Bill Memorial Library,  
240 Monument St. Groton, CT  
November 18—Dec. 1 - Public Library of New London,  
63 Huntington St., New London, CT

### ***Books, Brushes, Jazz & Blues* 2007**

**September 7, 8, & 9, 2007**

**Contact New London Main Street**

**for details: [newlondonmainstreet.org](http://newlondonmainstreet.org)**

**Books:** Local Authors read from their work at  
various locations in the Historic Waterfront  
District

**Brushes:** Wet Paint Week Artists will have their  
work displayed the 8th & 9th at the  
Hygienic Art Park

**Jazz & Blues:** Musical events all over town all week  
end

### ***Discover Neptune Park & Ocean Beach***

**A House & Walking Tour  
Saturday, September 15, 2007**

**Tickets: \$25 in advance  
Call Landmarks for reservations: 860-442-0003**

**Tickets: \$30 day of event  
Welcome Tent & Ticket Sales:  
At the pedestrian entrance to Ocean Beach**

**Free Parking at Ocean Beach:  
Follow the signs to parking area near the  
pedestrian entrance to the park**

Discover this historic New London neighborhood next  
door to Ocean Beach. Early 20th century homes line  
Mott, Elliott and Ocean Avenues. Tree-shaded streets  
curve along the shoreline creating a small neighbor-  
hood of cottages and elegant homes. Some are in  
their original condition, handed down through several  
family generations. Others are remodeled and/or ren-  
ovated.

This is an unusual opportunity to visit a small, se-  
cluded enclave of summer homes from the early 20th  
century. A selection of houses will be open for the  
tour.

## The Preservationist

## September, 2007



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