



THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING EDITION 2006

Dear Members:

It has been a year since we have reported any news about the saving of the 1790 Elam Ives House. The current situation is both good and bad.

In October of 2005, the Town of Hamden entered into an agreement with the Regional Water Authority to lease the land and to purchase the house. Thus, the house would be preserved at its present location. The threat of demolition seemed to have passed; the Town would take responsibility for the house and an educational center related to the Mill River.

It has been over a year and the RWA has not executed the agreement citing the need for more approvals, e.g. from the Representative Policy Board and to complete an Environmental Assessment (June 2005). As a result the Town put on hold a grant application to the CT Trust for Historic Preservation.

In April, the town was notified by the RWA that the CT Department of Public Health has reviewed the application of November 2005, for a permit to lease 0.25 acres of land at 95 Ives Street. The permit was denied. The land which is Class 1 land and within 100 feet of the Mill River, according to state statute cannot be leased.

The Society will continue to work with the Town and the RWA to preserve and reuse the Ives House. Even without the land, it can be saved. Because of its historic significance, we are proceeding with the grant application to the CT Trust to study the house for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Dates to Remember:

June 17th **Clean Up Day** in and around the J.D. House. 9:00AM to 1:00PM. All welcome.

July 1st **Summer Opening** of the Dickerman House for the summer weekends. 1:00 to 4:00PM.

August 27th **Last Sunday** for visiting the Dickerman House.

September TBA **Summer Roast.**

October 28th & 29th **Annual Antique Show.**

A Special Thank You

On behalf of the Board of Directors to Lois Casey and Nancy Faughnan for their generous time in scheduling and leading the Hamden school children tours at the Dickerman House this springtime.

ANOTHER PROFESSIONAL OFFICE BUILDING

The John Sanford house, located at 2584 Dixwell Avenue, was built in 1893. It is a highly detailed Queen Anne dwelling of the Victorian period. John Sanford owned a large lumberyard in Hamden and served in the State Legislature as a Representative and a Senator. His father lived in the family homestead on the street that bears the family name, This Sanford house is now a branch of Citizens Bank and a fine example of adapted use of older buildings. Citizens Bank had the foresight to maintain the structure's distinctive features while expanding to serve its customers' needs. A part of Hamden's architectural heritage was preserved, the scale of the area was retained, and the community benefited from an additional service business developed with style.

Nearby, at 2556 Dixwell Avenue, on the same north side, is a now yellow painted Greek Revival house built in 1858. This was the home of Dennis S. Sanford (1828-1900), a farmer at Meadowbrook across the road and an ice dealer. Although the original clapboards have been replaced, the entry, gable windows, and six over six sashes are all characteristic of the style inspired by the temple architecture of ancient Greece. Until recently, ownership was in the hands of an attorney who rented the house to students. Needless to say, the interior, which was in need of work, was further neglected.

The current and newest owner proposes to demolish the house and to construct a "Hamden Professional Center" (an office building for seven tenants) on this property which will be joined to a property on the east which he has also acquired. The proposed two and one half story building is 19,625 square feet in gross area in a neoclassic Georgian temple style" which is out of character for Hamden, too large for the neighborhood, and without reference to our heritage. In this case, adaptive reuse as a consideration failed and thus, this Sanford house will be no more.

What will take its place is a copycat like design which merges elements of various periods to fit into some vague image of "quaint" old New England, or Hamden in this case. This architectural mixed design is springing up for new offices or "professional" (which has a better sound) buildings at the edge of older residential neighborhoods. The new "premier building" will renew the neighborhood with 99 parking spaces, remove the existing mature trees, and replace "historic" with "historically designed." This design is an excuse to pacify those who want to preserve or restore architectural integrity where it exists.

Thankfully, the Sanford property will not be a "big box" or another brick square building with a touch of architectural detail. Of course, it is not possible to stop time, development and growth, nor change and progress. They have been part of our past and will continue to shape our future. But we might hope for change with integrity.



“THE CEDARS”

In the Jan/Feb 2005 issue of the *Connecticut Preservation News*, it was reported that a Technical Assistance Grant of \$1,500 was awarded to the Town of Hamden in partnership with the Whitneyville Civic Association. The grant was to fund a consultant who would prepare a nomination of a section of the Whitneyville area, known as “the Cedars” to the National Register of Historic Places.

The force behind this grant, the nomination, and the research is Peter Haller. He became interested in the idea of a National Register Historic District, literally in his back yard, and began photographing, fact-finding, and discussing the idea. Peter discovered the uniqueness of the area: bordered on the south by Putnam Avenue, east by Whitney Avenue, north by Mather Street and west by Clifford Street. He found that in 1903 the Munson Real Estate Company opened the Cedar Development, offering 168 lots for sale on 22 acres of former farmland.

The now proposed “Cedars Suburb Historic District” consists of 193 properties; all of which were constructed during the years between 1903 and 1930. A third of the houses are in the Craftsman Bungalow style that was very popular, and easily constructed from builders’ guides. Often one and one half story, they were wood framed with a tall gable roof which swept outward creating an open front porch. The Bungalow offered a lot of room in a small house. Almost half the styles are Classical or Colonial/Tudor revival, while other styles include Queen Anne and American Four Square (identified by its square plan, cube-like two story massing and hipped roof).

“The Cedars” as an Historic District, is an excellent example of a well-preserved residential suburb from the early 20th century. It is significant as Hamden’s most unified collection of the American Four Square and Craftsman Bungalow style houses placed on modest lots, along a grid pattern of streets. It is not just the architecture which makes “The Cedars” significant, but it is part of a land use, transition, and government. It was Hamden’s first chapter in its 20th century’s suburban development saga; the first phase in changing the Whitneyville farmland into the area we recognize today.

“The Cedars” a Suburb Historic District has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. Our community is indebted to Peter Haller who saw something special in his neighborhood. It is because of his keen eye for preservation, diligence, professional research, and love for Whitneyville that it will get the recognition it deserves. Thank you, Peter.

Ann Reddington (1918-2006). Ann was the first Archivist for the Society in our Hamden History Room Library at the Miller Memorial Library. She accepted the initial responsibility to organize, catalogue, arrange and display the Society’s myriad of files, records, photographs, artifacts and cartons of “stuff.” Out of chaos, Ann gave order; out of the boxes, she created a library. We miss her gentle charm, intelligence, and wisdom.



The Whitneyville Congregational Church was built in 1834 in a Greek Revival style. The congregation was established in 1795 with its first meetinghouse on Dixwell Avenue. In 1833, it was decided to build a new one besides the Cheshire Turnpike, on land donated by the widow of Eli Whitney. Photo from a donation of Chris Wanamaker.

NEWSLETTER

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 5512, HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06518