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SAVING THE BIRD HOMESTEAD: NATURAL ALLIES

The people of Westchester County, New York who feared for the uncertain future of the Bird Homestead, in Rye, were probably not weighing whether the property was most important as a historical place, as a natural habitat and buffer, as a potential recreational resource, as one of the area's very last farms, or as a scenic delight. All of these and more, the Bird Homestead was saved this summer because a coalition of preservationists, conservationists, and civic leaders worked determinedly, together, to embrace and protect all of the qualities of this cultural landscape.



Owned by five generations of the Bouton-Bird-Erikson family, it was home to entomologist Henry Bird and his sons Junius Bird, an archaeologist, and Roland Bird, a paleontologist, all of whom were scientific pioneers in their disciplines. The property is an acre situated on Blind Brook estuary, off the Long Island Sound, and contains a wonderfully-intact 1835 Greek Revival main house and 1880's

barn. Shorebirds and fish rely on the property's salt marsh edge, and in its current state, the site provides important flood protection and buffer.

The waterfront parcel was vulnerable in an area still buffeted by development pressure; though the property's owners had stewarded and cared deeply about the property's intangible qualities, they were beginning to consider options for the property's sale. In 2007, the threat inspired preservationist Anne Stillman and other volunteers to create the Committee to Save the Bird Homestead. Soon after, they sought the involvement of the long-established Westchester Land Trust. The City of Rye rounded out the coalition, which raised \$1.25 million for the city to acquire the property. Sources included a range of federal, state, county, and local funds, as well as corporate and foundation support, funding from the Westchester Land Trust itself, and over 80 individual donations.

The Committee to Save the Bird Homestead has signed a long-term lease with the city, and is preparing now to rehabilitate and reuse the property as an educational center and environmental preserve with kayak access to the water.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Northeast Office has been working with the Land Trust Alliance to strengthen the bond between preservation and conservation, in order to save more of what make's America's cultural landscapes special. The effort to save the Bird Homestead is a dazzling illustration of how this approach can protect whole places that matter.

JOIN THE NATIONAL TRUST AND KEEP UP WITH NEWS OF THE NORTHEAST

To learn about the latest developments in preservation and how you can become a member of the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**, send an email to nero@nthp.org to join our mailing list or to request membership information.

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND 2010 WATCH LIST NAMES TWO SITES IN THE NORTHEAST REGION AT RISK

On October 6, 2009, World Monuments Fund, the leading private organization dedicated to saving the world's most treasured places, announced their 2010 Watch List. Every two years since 1996, WMF, working in over 90 countries, has released the list, giving global attention to cultural heritage sites around the world that are threatened by neglect, demolition, or disaster. Among the sites chosen for the 2010 List are two from the northeast region of the United States: The Bridges of the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut and the Cultural Landscape of Hadley, Massachusetts.



The Merritt Parkway Photo Courtesy of WMF

Completed in 1940, the Merritt Parkway stretches 37.5 miles and was conceived in the 1920's as one of the earliest regional highways to be completed in the United States. Winding through the wooded landscape of southern Connecticut, the Merritt allows drivers to escape the interstates and meander through small towns and the countryside. The vision of Weld Thayer Chase, the landscape architect for the Merritt, continues today, with native trees, plants, and wildflowers following the road, fulfilling his desire that the road and drive reflect the natural beauty of southern Connecticut. Originally, the Merritt was designed with 68 bridges ranging in design from French Renaissance and neoclassic to art deco and rustic. The preservation of these many distinct bridges may be at risk due to necessary infrastructure work required to maintain the Merritt as a major thoroughfare. Balancing the functionality of the parkway while protecting the aesthetic qualities that make it unique pose challenges still to be addressed.

Located on the Connecticut River in Western Massachusetts, Hadley has had 350 years of continuous farming thanks to an "open field" system. This arrangement of slender, unfenced, elongated land parcels bounded by the river has endured since the time of the allotments to original settlers in 1659. The survival on such a large scale, over the centuries and through American industrialization in the northeastern United States, is incredibly improbable. The landscape and its heritage are at risk. A floodplain zone protects a portion of the 350-acre Great Meadow, but 165 acres are zoned for residential and commercial use, providing no long-term protection for the historic landscape and land use. Both the scenic beauty and historic context of Hadley could be compromised if preservation measures are not pursued.



Hadley, Massachusetts Photo Courtesy of WMF

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION PARTNERS AND ADVISORS IN THE NORTHEAST REGION

Statewide Partners

Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation; Maine Preservation; New Hampshire Preservation Alliance; Preservation Delaware; Preservation League of New York State; Preservation Massachusetts; Preservation New Jersey; Preservation Pennsylvania; Preserve Rhode Island; Preservation Trust of Vermont

Local Partners

CT: Hartford Preservation Alliance, New Haven Preservation Trust ME: Greater Portland Landmarks MA: Boston Preservation Alliance, Historic Boston, Inc., Preservation Worcester, Waterfront Historic Area League (WHALE) NY: Landmark Society of Western New York, Municipal Art Society of New York, The New York Landmarks Conservancy, Preservation Buffalo Niagara PA: Lower Merion Conservancy, Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia RI: Providence Preservation Society

Main Street Programs

Boston Main Streets (Boston, MA); Connecticut Main Street Center; Delaware Main Street Program; Main Street New Jersey; Maine Downtown Center; New Hampshire Main Street Center; Office of Community Development (PA); Pennsylvania Downtown Center; Vermont Downtown Program; Western Erie Canal Main Streets (NY)

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VT: Elizabeth Humstone, Robert McBride
At-Large: Gretchen Sorin (NY), Keith Stokes (RI)

UPCOMING DATES, DEADLINES AND EVENTS

NOVEMBER

Don't miss **RAIL-VOLUTION 2009**, a conference on building livable communities with transit, for passionate practitioners from all perspectives who believe strongly in the role of land use and transit as equal partners in the quest for greater livability and greater communities. **Rail-Volution is being held in Boston, Massachusetts October 29–November 1st, 2009**. For more information, click [HERE](#).

The deadline for applications for the **American Academy in Rome's Rome Prize** in Historic Preservation and Conservation, Design, Architecture and other arts and humanities fields is **November 1, 2009**. Rome Prize winners reside at the Academy's 11-acre center in Rome and receive room and board, a study or studio, and a stipend for 6-month or 11-month fellowships. For more information, visit the Academy's website, www.aarome.org

The **Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation** is now accepting Pre-Applications and Final Applications for **Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grants (HPTAGs)**. These grants are technical assistance grants or preservation planning grants which may be awarded to 501 (c)(3) non-profit organizations or municipalities. Pre-Applications are due by **Monday, November 2, 2009**. Final Applications are due Tuesday, December 15, 2009. Click [HERE](#) for more information and to download forms.

North Bennet Street School in Boston, Massachusetts offers an education in craftsmanship. Courses prepare graduates for work in fields that require craftsmanship, skillful use of hand tools and power equipment, informed choice of appropriate materials, knowledgeable and creative problem-solving grounded in awareness of the best solutions of the craft over many years, and a commitment to the highest quality of work.

North Bennet Street School's **2009 Open House** is Friday, November 6th - 10 am to 2 pm and Saturday, November 7th - 10 am to 3 pm. For more information, visit their website at www.nbss.org.

Syracuse University has 10 full scholarships available for African American men and women interested in pursuing a five year professional degree in Architecture. Dean Mark Robbins is deeply committed to bringing diversity to the field. For more information, visit **Syracuse University School of Architecture's** website at: <http://soa.syr.edu/index.php>

DECEMBER

Stay tuned for more information on the **Conference on Historic Preservation and Sustainability** to be held by the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia on **December 8, 2009** from 8:30am—2pm. Check in with the Alliance's website for updates: www.preservationalliance.com

2010 and beyond...

Start thinking about your nominations for the National Trust for Historic Preservation's **2010 11 Most Endangered Historic Places!** The list has become one of the most effective tools in the fight to save the country's irreplaceable architectural, cultural and natural heritage. Nomination forms will be available beginning November 2, 2009 at: www.preservationnation.org/issues/11-most-endangered. The deadline for submissions is **January 15, 2010**.

Nominations for the **Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh's Top Ten Best Preservation Opportunities in the Pittsburgh Area are due January 29, 2010**. YPA is looking for properties that have not yet been preserved—historic and architecturally-significant structures threatened with neglect, abandonment, or demolition but have a good chance for survival and reuse, with particular interest in historic structures in City of Pittsburgh neighborhoods. However, sites will also be considered from the nine-county Pittsburgh region: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland counties. Click [HERE](#) for a nomination form, or visit YPA's website at: www.youngpreservationists.org

Executive directors, northeast advisors, and other invited guests, please mark your calendars for the next **Northeast Regional Preservation Leadership Meeting to be held April 18 - 20, 2010**. The meeting will convene at the Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, NY, a fantastic *Historic Hotel of America* in the Hudson River Valley.

The American Friends of Coubertin have announced the availability of **training fellowships** for September 2010 -July 2011 in woodwork, metalwork, and stonework at the Coubertin Foundation outside Paris, France. The deadline for applying is January 31, 2010. For more information, visit their website at: www.afcoubertin.org. Click [HERE](#) for the application form.