



**The Justin Kimberley House was built circa 1828 as Timber frame center-hall home, as revealed when all the exterior sheathing and siding was removed by historic preservation craftsman Christopher Wuerth.**

Photos: Jean Pogwizd for The New Haven Preservation Trust; Suma House (before, 1980s): Collection of The New Haven Preservation Trust



**Slated for demolition in 2008, PMC Property Group stepped in and salvaged the factory facades built between 1875 and 1910 now called 38 Crown Street in New Haven's Ninth Square, completing the revitalization of the Elm City's original nine blocks begun in the 1980s.** Photo Courtesy of PMC Property Group, Inc.



**Yale's 'A&A' (Art & Architecture) building was restored by the university and reincarnated as Rudolph Hall, resurrecting the variety of interior spaces that had been completely subdivided for decades until the building underwent a comprehensive restoration, facilitated by adding new space in 2008.** Photo: Courtesy Yale.

# Preserving the Past for the Future

*New Haven Preservation Trust celebrates three restoration projects — residential, commercial and institutional*

By DUO DICKINSON

Preservation of “important” architecture may embody sustainability and common sense — but it also takes courage. Our culture is defined by acts of creativity and innovation that sometimes fly in the face of conventional wisdom. It’s always easier to wait for others to take the risk, but when it comes to sparing something that can never be replaced, hesitation may be the greatest risk of all. In New Haven, architectural legacies are sustained on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood, block-by-block and even building-by-building basis by those who care enough to act — and dare enough not to hesitate.

The New Haven Preservation Trust was founded in 1961 at the height of the bold exercise in city-planning hubris known as “urban renewal.” “Make No Small Plans” was the mantra of Daniel Burnham, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century urban designer whose attitude inspired Robert Moses in New York and others to equate “old” with “bad.” In 1950s New Haven Mayor Richard C. Lee embraced the “urban renewal” mantra and ran with it — creatively leveraging far more federal dollars per capita than any other city in America to effect a fundamental transformation of the city center.

With each new project, old buildings were demolished. Stately homes, hotels and commercial buildings all fell, but New Haven Preservation Trust (NHPT) rose to the defense of the Ives Free Public Library, the New Haven Post Office and Federal Building, New Haven City Hall, the John Davies Mansion, Union Station and multiple private residences and commercial buildings throughout the city. Part of this heroic effort assumed the form of an awards program that highlighted positive examples of preservation. Over 200 various awards were given between 1969 and 2009. Since then, however, the NHPT has not bestowed any awards over the last five years.

When I joined the board of the NHPT three years ago, the awards program was not on the organization’s current agenda. But NHPT

Preservation Services Officer John Herzan and architect Robert Grzywacz, chair of the Preservation Committee, thought a renewed awards program made sense. They asked me and architectural historian Chris Wigren, deputy director of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, to create a next generation of awards to dovetail with Historic Preservation Month, which is May.

This reborn awards program was entitled “Exemplary Acts of Leadership In Preservation: Celebrating the Determination of Those Who Preserve New Haven’s Architecture and Neighborhoods.”

The three projects were a 1828 home in the up-by-its-bootstraps Fair Haven neighborhood, an adaptive reuse of abandoned factory buildings into apartments that was the last un-renovated piece of the Ninth Square revitalization and Yale’s Rudolph Hall (formerly known as the A+A Building) which capstones Yale’s intense effort to preserve its extraordinary gallery of Modernist Masterpiece buildings.

Leadership in preservation can assume many forms — but it’s nearly always the product of those who become heroes by acting boldly on a belief in the greater good of their efforts. Whether it’s a family that loves its home and believes in its neighborhood, developers who discern value in abandoned buildings, or institutions that look beyond the bottom line to place aesthetics over expediency, courage is required when conventional wisdom militates against bold action.

The 2014 winners are:

## Justin Kimberly House

The 2014 Preservation Award is “for houses as outstanding representatives of their period. They exhibit much of their original character and condition by virtue of continued appropriate maintenance or sensitive rehabilitation.” It goes to the 2011 restoration of the exterior of the c. 1828 Justin Kimberly House at 624 Quinnipiac Avenue in Fair Haven on the banks of the Quinnipiac River. The owners are Sean Hundtofte and Bridget Suma.

Fair Haven has experienced generations of sweeping change — from boom to bust and back again. Every economic and social transition New England has endured has been encapsulated within this historic fishing village subsumed in a small city. For good and for ill, economic self-interest whipsaws communities. But the personal dedication of individual families has long-term benefits that go far beyond any mere resale value alone.

Families like the Suma/Hundtofes save our history, and offer it up for the common enrichment. As this little home becomes whole, room-by-room, floor over floor, garden-by-garden, the fertilization is not limited to its own property boundaries. Faith in the future is contagious, and it can cure the fear of the unknown and preserve our heritage, place by place.

Recounts Bridget Suma: “We moved to New Haven for what we thought would be a somewhat temporary five to six years and bought the house partially as an investment. However, because of our adventure and emotional connection with this house

— we were married in the backyard on the river!  
— our neighbors and the river we will try to make New Haven our home for as long as possible.”

## 38 Crown Street

The NHPT Merit Plaque is to be awarded to “historic buildings that have been authentically restored, or sensitively rehabilitated for adaptive use.” It goes to the last unrenovated building in New Haven’s Ninth Square development district, a privately developed apartment renovation at 38 Crown Street, combining three former factory structures built between 1875 to 1910. PMC Property Group finished the complete preservation/adaptive use project in 2011.

Beyond the preservation of classic factory facades this award recognizes the economic courage it takes to risk in a poor economy. In 2010 at the bottom of the present recession these last few buildings in Ninth Square were in various states of extreme distress, to the point of near-collapse, but a developer was willing to take a risk in a risk-averse environment, and those last threatened parts of the district were brought back from the brink of demolition to become tax-paying, business-housing resources that completed a threatened part of the neighborhood that had managed to defy the odds in the two decades since its original revitalization. 38 Crown Street, as the final product is now called, is a 65-apartment resurrection of near-death structures and was cited by the NHPT as a role model of corporate courage and belief in the value of historic

Continued on page 55

## PRESERVATION

Continued from page 49

rehabilitation work.

This award recognizes both the faith in New Haven of PMC Property Group in accepting the challenge to save those structures, but also all those who worked tirelessly over several decades to save the context for this development: Ninth Square in New Haven.

## Rudolph Hall, Yale University

The NHPT’s highest honor is its Landmark Plaque For Extraordinary Devotion To Preservation. It recognizes work to save “Buildings or sites of outstanding and enduring architectural and historical significance.” The 2014 award recognizes the Yale Art + Architecture Building (Rudolph Hall) that was completely restored to its original quirky magnificence in 2009.

But more than just this uncompromised act of curatorially precise restoration, the award was intended to acknowledge Yale’s dedication to preserving its Modernist architecture. As NHPT’s Chris Wigren notes: “In the 1950s and ‘60s, Yale University erected a number of important Modernist buildings. It was an optimistic era, which believed that a rapidly changing world needed an entirely new way of building to take advantage of its scientific and technical progress and meet the needs of its citizens. Yale put itself in the forefront of this movement, bringing prominent architects from around the world and giving them free rein to conduct their experiments. The results were a world-renowned series of aesthetic successes — even if some eventually proved to be functional or urbanistic failures.”

Recognizing their importance, Yale has embarked on a mission to maintain and restore many of its Modernist buildings. In addition to the A+A building, the university has sensitively renovated Louis Kahn’s Yale University Art Gallery, Eero Saarinen’s Ingalls Rink (a/k/a the Yale Whale) and Stiles and Morse colleges, and is embarking on a renovation of Kahn’s Yale Center for British Art. The university also has converted the former Jewish Community Center, with its façade by Louis Kahn, for the School of Art. And the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript library, with its generous maintenance endowment, will itself undergo an extensive renovation between May 2015 and September 2016.

The renewed awards program dovetails perfectly with the New Haven Preservation Trust’s new website — [NewHavenModern.org](http://NewHavenModern.org) — which features many of these Yale buildings in its first 30 projects featured, a website that will ultimately grow to include more than 100 Modernist icons, including more of Yale’s unmatched inventory of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Modern Masterpieces.