

10 MOST ENDANGERED

Historic Places in New Jersey 2016



BY CALLING ATTENTION TO OUR STATE'S MOST THREATENED HISTORIC TREASURES, *PRESERVATION NEW JERSEY'S 2016 TEN MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES* INCREASES PUBLIC AWARENESS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION ISSUES AND FOCUSES CRITICAL ATTENTION ON SELECTED PROPERTIES TO ASSIST IN THEIR PRESERVATION. WE HOPE THESE LISTINGS WILL CREATE AWARENESS AND ACTION FOR PRESERVATION SOLUTIONS FOR HISTORIC RESOURCES IN THE GARDEN STATE.

UNION HOTEL

BOROUGH OF FLEMINGTON
HUNTERDON COUNTY



In January 1935, the eyes of the nation were on Flemington, New Jersey. Bruno Richard Hauptmann was on trial in the county courthouse for the kidnapping and murder of the young son of world-renowned aviator Charles A. Lindbergh. Journalist H.L. Mencken called it the "biggest story since the Resurrection." The jury was sequestered in the landmark Union Hotel, which is currently threatened with demolition in an otherwise laudable and long-overdue plan to revitalize downtown Flemington.

The plan threatens not only the landmark 1814 hotel, which has been vacant since 2008, but also the adjacent Victorian buildings along Main Street. These buildings, most of which date from the 1880s, are still occupied. They are the heart of historic downtown Flemington, comprising the streetscape that gives Flemington its special character.

Preservation New Jersey (PNJ) welcomes this effort to reestablish Flemington as a civic and commercial center in Hunterdon County and western New Jersey. But we see no reason why redevelopment must destroy a community in order to save it.

There are many cases where

smart, preservation-minded redevelopment schemes have worked. In New Jersey, Clinton, Frenchtown, and Hopewell are good examples. Elsewhere, Savannah, Georgia; Newburyport, Massachusetts; and Portland, Maine showcase economically-successful revitalization centered around historic downtowns.

Moreover, the National Trust's Main Street program has assisted many similar projects, and the New Jersey Building Code addresses this type of project specifically. Also, with the Union Hotel listed on the National Register of Historic Places, substantial federal investment tax credits are available.

With a smart, preservation-minded redevelopment scheme, these buildings can be the centerpiece of a successful and lively business and entertainment district reflecting both the past and future of Flemington. If these buildings are demolished, this link to Flemington's past will be lost forever. PNJ strongly urges the developer to rethink his plan and retain the core of historic Flemington. It is a financially feasible and culturally responsible way to go.

EAST BROADWAY HISTORIC DISTRICT

CITY OF SALEM
SALEM COUNTY



Route 49 is a heavily travelled road, an important path from the Delaware Memorial Bridge into South Jersey. It is a main artery in Salem and a showcase of eighteenth and nineteenth century architecture in the city. East Broadway has an important collection of Federal-style houses plus a smattering of other buildings built in revival styles. It is also home to two important black churches, one of which, Mt. Pisgah A.M.E., is the oldest of its denomination in New Jersey.

The economy of Salem has been in decline for many years. Its population in 2016 is scarcely half what it was at the city's 1950 peak. The latest serious blow came in 2014, when the last glass manufacturer in the city closed, costing nearly 300 jobs. The East Broadway streetscape reflects these difficulties. There are over twenty vacant buildings in a two-thirds of a mile stretch, ranging from recently-abandoned homes in fairly good condition to a Federal-style house with a large hole in its roof. Two buildings may be beyond repair if not stabilized soon.

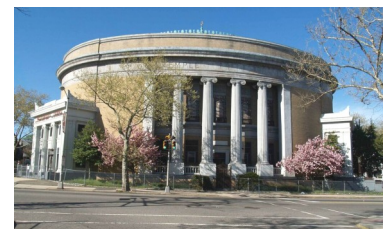
A number of steps will be necessary to reverse the decline of East Broadway. First, the City of Salem should use New Jersey's Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act to pursue property owners who are not maintaining their buildings. Salem must also make efforts to attract homeowners of sufficient means to rehabilitate and maintain the properties, as has happened in the past along West Broadway and Market Street.

A state Historic Preservation Tax Credit could be very beneficial in Salem. It works in other states. Offering a tax credit for funds

spent rehabilitating historic buildings both motivates current owners to rehabilitate their buildings and attracts new owners to purchase and restore abandoned structures. Such a bill was approved by both houses of the legislature, but was vetoed by the governor a few years ago. The bill has been reintroduced in the current legislative session. PNJ urges the enactment of a Historic Preservation Tax Credit this year. The increased activity in rehabilitation it is projected to stimulate will repay the loss of tax revenue, and its benefit to East Broadway in Salem and other deteriorated New Jersey neighborhoods would be large.

DELIVERANCE EVANGELISTIC CENTER

CITY OF NEWARK
ESSEX COUNTY



The majestic circular building on Clinton Avenue that was recently home to the Deliverance Evangelistic Center was originally Temple B'nai Abraham. Built in 1924, to a design by Newark architect Nathan Myers, B'nai Abraham's 2000-seat sanctuary was the largest in New Jersey. The congregation was led for many years by Rabbi Joachim Prinz, an associate of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and a speaker at the famous August 1963 "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom."

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In 1972, B'nai Abraham sold its building to Deliverance Evangelical Ministries and relocated to suburban Livingston Township.

Deliverance Evangelical Ministries was founded in 1957 by Reverend Arturo Skinner, a radio preacher and organizer of revivalist "crusades" such as that proclaiming "A Supernatural Christ for a Superficial World," which drew thousands to New York City's Felt Forum in 1971. Reverend Skinner, who conceived of the Deliverance Center as "an organism of the Body of Christ," died in 1975. He was replaced by Apostle Ralph G. Shammah Nichol, whose daughter, Reverend Dawn A. Nichol, leads the center today.

The Deliverance Center's membership has been in decline for some years, and the group has cancelled many of its programs. The congregation, now quite small, no longer uses the building, which is vacant and fenced off. It needs a roof, a new boiler, and much other work. The power is off due to a large unpaid utility bill.

This grand building is a Newark landmark that should be saved. PNJ hopes the Center will be able to build a partnership with local government and spiritual and civic groups to put this remarkable building back to good use.

DR. JAMES STILL OFFICE TOWNSHIP OF MEDFORD BURLINGTON COUNTY



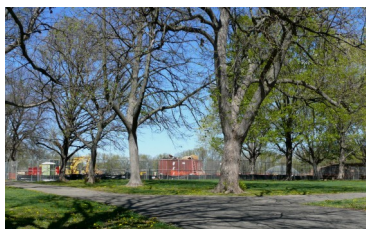
This one-story, hip-roofed, vernacular structure was built as an office in 1836 by James Still (1812-1882), who was known as the "black doctor of the pines." Still, the son of former slaves from Maryland was barred from attending medical school because of his race. He became an herbalist and practitioner of folk

medicine. After apprenticing with a local doctor, Still combined his knowledge of local botany with then-current medical practice. He dispensed remedies from his office and also bottled and sold various sassafras- and peppermint-based herbal remedies.

The property remained in Still family hands until the 1880s. A century and a quarter later, in 2006, it was purchased by the State of New Jersey. Although this modest, virtually unadorned, frame building is the first state-owned historic site in New Jersey associated with African-American history, the Division of Parks and Forestry has undertaken no work on the property during the decade it has been in state hands. Despite a preservation plan funded by the New Jersey Historic Trust in 2009, the building has been left vacant, inaccessible, and deteriorating.

It is not too late for the Dr. James Still Office. The official friends group, the Medford Historical Society, is planning a fund-raising campaign for its restoration, and surely privately raised funds will be necessary. But the lack of funding from the state is the principal culprit here. In 2014, New Jersey voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment dedicating a portion of the Corporate Business Tax to open space and historic preservation. But so far the governor and legislature have not been able to agree on the necessary bill for implementation. The legislature has done its part, now PNJ calls on the governor to heed the will of the voters and implement the terms of the 2014 referendum.

RAHWAY RIVER PARK CITY OF RAHWAY UNION COUNTY



Soon after its creation in 1921, the Union County Parks Commission hired the Olmstead Brothers firm to

design a system of parks for the county. Partner Percival Gallagher's plan included suburban and urban parks, a reservation in the Watchung Mountains, and parkways to link them up along the Elizabeth and Rahway rivers.

The 124-acre Rahway River Park, on which construction began in 1926, was one of four neighborhood parks in the original plan. Its key features are the Rahway River, which cradles the park and serves as its backdrop; a large open field dotted with informal ball fields that offers uninterrupted site lines in all directions; and a perimeter walk shaded by a line of mature trees. It is currently one of the busiest parks in the county system.

Despite significant local opposition, Union County broke ground in December 2015 on a project that is inconsistent with the park's historical uses and insensitive to its design significance. In concert with the Rahway Board of Education, the county government is expanding a track and field complex within the park (including construction of a new field house and a concessions stand) for the primary use of the Rahway schools.

It is too late to stop this project, which will ruin the original open-space, passive-recreation park designed for everyone in favor of an artificial-turf-based venue for competitive sporting events in which few participate and many watch. PNJ hopes it is not too late to prevent additional detrimental actions at this or other parks in the Union County system. We call on the stewards of the county's parks to be sensitive to the historical significance of their Olmstead Brothers-firm designed parks and to the competing needs of many types of open-space users. As a first step, listing Rahway River Park, and possibly the entire county system on the State and/or National Registers of Historic Places would build in a level of oversight for future publically-funded park projects.

VAN DIEN-RUFFGARTEN HOUSE

BOROUGH OF PARAMUS
BERGEN COUNTY



Although the Van Dien-Ruffgarten House is known locally as the "Mud House," it is not mud. Its oldest portion is built of stone that is bound with mud mortar. It is one of six examples remaining in Paramus of the once common Jersey Dutch Stone house.

Built in the 1840s, this modest house was likely among the last stone houses built in the area. Census records strongly suggest that it was occupied in the 1850s and 1860s by members of a small African-American community in Paramus. In 1869, the house was sold to Peter Ruffgarten, a recent immigrant from the Netherlands, who added a frame section to the stone house.

In the not-distant past, the building served as a boarding house, but it is currently vacant, deteriorating, and for sale. The Paramus Historic Preservation Commission asked the Borough of Paramus to consider buying the nine-acre property, but the Borough declined. There is tremendous development pressure in this area. A builder recently put twenty townhouses on a smaller lot across the street from this parcel. PNJ believes that even modest stone houses such as this one deserve to be treasured. They are a dwindling resource. We call on the preservation community and local authorities to be creative in seeking alternatives to the demolition of this special reminder of the Dutch culture in New Jersey's past.

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THE FORUM THEATRE *BOROUGH OF METUCHEN MIDDLESEX COUNTY*



The Colonial-Revival style Forum Theatre opened in March 1928, at the dawn of Hollywood's "Golden Age." It was built by local businessmen James Forgione and H.A. Rumler, who named the theatre by combining the first letters of their last names.

The two-story, reddish-brick building has flat pilasters at the corners and at each side of the marquee. Its art-moderne interior has sleek, curved surfaces and leather seats. A 1990 inventory of historic sites listed the Forum Theatre as a contributing building to the historic downtown of Metuchen, and it is likely eligible for the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Forum was in regular use well into the 1980s, but several factors combined to complicate operation of the theatre: the antiquated HVAC system breaks down frequently; the aging projection equipment requires costly upgrades to show first run movies; and the theatre faces severe competition from surrounding mass market movie theaters. Despite these challenges, the Forum still operates intermittently. The building is for sale, however, and there is local concern that a sale could lead to the building's demolition in favor of housing or commercial development.

Many historic theatres in New Jersey face similar circumstances. The Washington Theatre in Washington Borough, Warren County, has fallen into disrepair and is for sale. The Rivoli Theatre in Rutherford needs extensive repairs and a viable program of use. The Loew's Jersey in Jersey City has made good progress in repairing its infrastructure and Baroque ornamentation, but it still

faces an uphill climb raising the money to complete the needed work and become a regional performing arts center.

Historic theatres are great cultural resources. Their rehabilitation often becomes a catalyst for the improvement of entire urban areas. PNJ encourages the Metuchen community to recognize the Forum Theatre's worth and to work with the local government to ensure its preservation.

HUGG-HARRISON-GLOVER HOUSE

*BOROUGH OF BELLMAWR
CAMDEN COUNTY*



Built in stages between the 1720s and 1764, the Hugg-Harrison-Glover House is notable both for the 1764 date visible in the patterned brickwork of its west end, and for its association with the War for Independence. Militia Captain William Harrison fought under the Marquis de Lafayette in the Battle of Gloucester, helping to slow the British Army's advance on Philadelphia. The building remained in private hands until 1921, when it was acquired by the Diocese of Camden. It has been the office of the New Saint Mary Cemetery since the cemetery opened in 1923.

The threat is demolition, and the problem is complicated. The building, the oldest house in Bellmawr, is in the path of the massive "Direct Connection" project linking I-295 with state Route 42, planning for which began more than a decade ago. Unfortunately, the significance of the Hugg-Harrison-Glover House was overlooked during early project planning. In 2005, the state Department of Transportation (DOT) rejected the recommendation of a consultant and ruled that the house, the last remaining home in Camden County of a Revolutionary War

officer, was ineligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Preservation Office (HPO) okayed demolition, but later reconsidered. A site visit in 2014 revealed that the proposed construction would adversely affect a register-eligible historic property. As mitigation, DOT offered to fund a study of patterned-brick architecture in Southern New Jersey. The HPO accepted this proposal and the work continues, including the prospective demolition of the Hugg-Harrison-Glover House.

The Camden County Historical Society is leading a coalition of community leaders and residents who want to save the building. The group proposes to move the building to a nearby site with the historical society taking responsibility for its preservation. PNJ believes this should satisfy all parties. The cemetery would still receive a new administration building, DOT would be able to complete its road and barrier construction, and New Jersey would save an irreplaceable patterned-brick building. The Diocese of Camden is unwilling to have the house relocated to its property, but alternative locations are available. We join with Congressman Donald Norcross and the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program in calling on DOT to exhaust all efforts to save the building.

DETERIORATING INFRASTRUCTURE OF NJ STATEWIDE



In its most recent report on the nation's infrastructure, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) rated New

Jersey a D+. The construction, repair, and maintenance of the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities of New Jersey are critically underfunded. With so many old roads, bridges, dams, water systems, schools, ports, etc., and such high population density, the situation is growing dire. We have 3.9 million daily commuters. Even modest disruptions in service can inconvenience tens of thousands, as last summer's problems with the electrical system in the Hudson River rail tunnels demonstrated.

Two historic bridges that were recently closed due to their poor structural condition – the Nottingham Way Bridge in Hamilton Township and the Glimmer Glass Bridge in the Borough of Manasquan – are poster children for the hundreds if not thousands of bridges whose maintenance has been deferred. ASCE estimates that almost a tenth of the nearly 6,600 bridges in the state, are structurally deficient, and over a quarter are functionally obsolete. ASCE also calculates that nearly two thirds of New Jersey's major roads are in mediocre or worse condition. Our motorists spend an annual average of \$605 each on car repairs due to deficient road conditions.

The mass transit infrastructure network is equally in need of adequate funding. The Hudson River rail tunnels are only one big storm away from bringing bi-state transportation to its knees. The sudden cancellation by Governor Christie in 2010 of the ARC (Access to Region's Core) project, which would have provided two new Hudson River rail tunnels, was a major setback to New Jersey Transit (the third largest rail system in the country) in its effort to meet the state's commuting needs. New Jersey is simply not keeping up.

On top of the safety considerations and concerns about major service disruptions, many of the state's deteriorating

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bridges, tunnels, dams, roads, etc., also are valuable and vulnerable historic resources. The Holland Tunnel is a National Historic Landmark, and the Lincoln Tunnel approach and helix are eligible for listing on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. The Stony Brook Bridge in Princeton, the oldest bridge in the state, was recently closed after a partial collapse, and still is not open to truck traffic. The vacant and deteriorating Liberty State Park Train Terminal is listed on the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places; already in a precarious condition, it was heavily damaged by Hurricane Sandy.

The New Jersey Transportation Trust Fund (TTF), which is funded primarily by gasoline tax receipts, is the best vehicle for funding the state's deteriorating infrastructure. Established by Governor Thomas Kean in 1984, it was the first program of its kind in the nation. But the gas-tax rate has not increased since the TTF was established. Today, when most of the fund's revenue goes to debt service, New Jersey has the second lowest rate in the country. (Behind only Alaska.)

PNJ believes it is time to raise the gas tax so New Jersey can begin to improve its deteriorating transportation infrastructure. According to recent public opinion polls, most New Jerseyans agree. We call on Trenton to follow suit.

WHYMAN HOUSE *CITY OF ELIZABETH UNION COUNTY*



Built between 1860 and 1871, the Whyman House, on Newark Avenue in Elizabeth, is a fine example of a cubical Italianate villa. The wood-frame home consists of a nearly-square two-and-one-half-story main block with a low-pitched hipped roof and a two-story rear ell with a flat roof. It is detailed with an elaborate front porch, segmentally-arched sash windows with architrave trim, a

Founded in 1978, Preservation New Jersey advocates for and promotes historic preservation as a sustainable strategy to protect and enhance the vitality and heritage of New Jersey's richly diverse communities. PNJ is the only statewide private membership-supported historic preservation organization in New Jersey.

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bracketed cornice, and a square cupola.

The Whyman House is one of the last unaltered examples of a once common house type in Elizabeth. With its extant outbuildings and landscape features such as a carriage house, privy, fountain, chicken coops, greenhouse, and other features, the site is a rare surviving example of the suburban villa properties that were prevalent in Elizabeth during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Thomas Whyman purchased the home in 1902. One or another of his five children lived in the house until 1966, when Joseph K. Whyman, the last of them died. He willed the home to the Central Baptist Church, which used it as its Parish House for many years.

The building has been vacant for a decade and it has deteriorated.

The property is now for sale and threatened by development. Its large lot size, location, and commercial zoning make it attractive for development. The Church, which still owns it, has been unresponsive to residents' inquiries about the future of the property. PNJ encourages the Central Baptist Church to reach out to the broader community and City officials to develop an adaptive re-use for the building. If it is to be sold, the Church should seek a sympathetic buyer who appreciates its historic significance and will rehabilitate the house and property. Something must be done before Elizabeth loses this local landmark and wastes an opportunity to show the value of our historic and architectural resources and their ability to be put to new uses.