

Asylum Ave Mansions part 3

When we left off last month we noted that there are fewer than 100 single family, owner-occupied brick Victorian homes remaining in Asylum Hill. That is less than a quarter of the more than 400 such homes that are shown on the Sanborn map from 1920. Very few of them it would seem were even photographed or if they were, the photographs are no longer available.



As one tours Hartford's neighborhoods, it becomes very clear, that this concentration of brick Victorian homes exists nowhere else, which is why they are so important to the fabric of Asylum Hill.

However it is the show homes, the "mansions" that draw the greatest attention, and none more so, than of course the Mark Twain Home and those of his neighbor Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Katherine Seymour Day home. As has been mentioned in various Then & Now columns, there were several Warner homes nearby on Forest St as well as Goodwin estates on Woodland that have not survived, and these are just a few of the really grand homes that once populated Asylum Hill.

But we can't live in the past, so I'd like to turn your attention to a few of the other grand homes that have survived and what they are being used for.

136-38 Collins St is a 2nd Empire style home built about 1870 and one of the largest after Twain and Stowe. It is owned by CIL Inc. and is leased to Community Solutions Inc. CSI provides re-entry services for people from the criminal justice system. Their main office is in Bloomfield, and of the 12 sites that they operate in Connecticut, 5 are in Hartford, 2 in Asylum Hill.

Another such home is of course 360 Farmington, the home of HartBeat Ensemble across the street from the Twain and Stowe homes. The property includes the Carriage House Theatre that was created from the original carriage house behind the home. The home is currently used for offices both for HartBeat and other tenants.

Other such repurposed mansions in the area include 49 Woodland, The Perkins-Clark home, now a part of the Wheeler Clinic campus and 66 Forest St, the Charles Boardman Smith home, both part of the original Nook Farm area. The Boardman Smith home was for a while the offices of the Antiquarian and Landmark Society, and has had several owners since then. It is currently owned by the estate of Okryun Marrero who purchased it in 2016.

Perhaps the most relevant example of a preserved mansion from this period is the home at 847 Asylum. We'll look into that next month. Photos of these former mansions are available at <https://photos.app.goo.gl/fnWmAWc78ecktcnx7>