

# glastonbury LIFE

August 2018 • TurleyCT.com  
A product of TurleyCT Community Publications  
VOLUME 5, EDITION 11

## A passion for history

Steve Bielitz  
preserves the past

See story on page 14

CONNECTICUT RIVERVALLEY  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

...at the corner of  
**BUSINESS & COMMUNITY**

Start growing your network at  
**CRVCHAMBER.ORG**

2400 Main Street, Glastonbury  
1137 Main Street, East Hartford  
**860.659.3587**

Residential Customer  
EGR-WSS

PRRST STD  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PALMER, MA  
PERMIT #22

TurleyCT Community Publications  
540 Hopmeadow St.  
Simsbury, CT 06070

**BODEAU REALTY GROUP**  
AT WILLIAM RAVEIS REAL ESTATE

Bring Your Own Blankets/Lawnchairs  
To Relax & Enjoy

### OUTDOOR MOVIE NIGHT

Riverfront Park, 200 Welles Street Glastonbury

Free Admission  
Donations Appreciated  
Movie Starts @ Dusk!

Popcorn,  
Facepainting,  
Food Trucks, &  
More!

**AUGUST  
16th**

Benefits  
Hole in the  
Wall Gang



Follow us on Facebook or  
[www.GlastonburyMovieNight.com](http://www.GlastonburyMovieNight.com)

Nancy Thompson photo



When Steve Bielitz dismantles a historic structure he assigns a number and letter to each piece so they can be reassembled.

# A passion for history

Steve Bielitz preserves and restores historic homes

by Nancy Thompson  
Editor

Steve Bielitz recalls asking his parents to take him to places like Old Sturbridge Village, Gettysburg, Fort Ticonderoga, the House of the Seven Gables and Colonial Williamsburg when he was about six. In fact, he can't remember a time when he wasn't interested in history and old houses.

"They brought me to all those places," he said.

Then, when he was in first grade, a friend brought him to visit his aunt who lived in an old Victorian house in Portland and he became even more interested. "I was fascinated," he said.

That fascination continued to grow and has become not only his passion, but his profession.

Bielitz, who described himself as "totally self-taught," started as a house painter and, not surprisingly, found himself getting involved with old houses.

For close to 30 years, he has traveled around the state – and often beyond – to inspect, evaluate and rebuild historic buildings. The rebuilding might happen on site, or it might entail painstakingly dismantling the building and rebuilding it elsewhere or storing it for sale and future use.

"I do a lot of research," he said. "I understand the details and have a library of a few thousand books. I love to learn what people were doing in the 17th and 18th centuries." He also spends a lot of time with historians, including the late Abbott Lowell Cummings, considered to be the pre-eminent expert in American

When LIFE Matters...  
Turnpike Motors is there.



One of Connecticut's largest,  
full-service, collision repair facilities.

- ✓ Complete auto body repair
- ✓ Heavy duty truck body repair
- ✓ Commercial vehicle body repair
- ✓ Lifetime warranty on all auto body repairs



**Turnpike Motors**  
Autobody  
2550 Berlin Turnpike • Newington, CT  
860-666-3319  
www.TurnpikeMotors.com



## Shred with confidence

Take an important step in protecting your identity:  
shred old documents and files

united problem solvers™

The UPS Store

In Griswold Mall  
2842 Main St  
Glastonbury, CT 06033  
(860) 633-0051  
store0648@theupsstore.com@theupsstore.com  
theupsstorelocal.com/0648

Hours:  
Mon - Fri 07:30 AM-06:00 PM  
Sat 07:30 AM-01:00 PM  
Sun Closed

**5 LBS FREE**  
SHREDDING SERVICES

Limit one coupon per customer. Not valid with other offers. Restrictions apply. Valid and redeemable only when presented at a participating location. The UPS Store centers are independently owned and operated. © 2016 The UPS Store, Inc.  
Offer expires 8/31/18

The UPS Store

All shredding and recycling receptacles and services are provided by Iron Mountain Information Management, LLC and its subcontractors (collectively, "Iron Mountain"). Neither The UPS Store, Inc., nor The UPS Store® franchise network are affiliates of Iron Mountain, and no sponsorship or endorsement is intended or implied. The UPS Store locations are independently owned and operated by franchisees of The UPS Store, Inc. in the USA and by its master licensee and its franchisees in Canada. Products, services, pricing and hours of operation may vary by location. Valid at participating U.S. locations. BY USING THESE SERVICES YOU AGREE THAT THEY ARE PROVIDED "AS IS" AND WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY OR REPRESENTATION OF ANY KIND, WHETHER EXPRESS, IMPLIED OR STATUTORY, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF SATISFACTORY QUALITY, MERCHANTABILITY, AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, AND WITHOUT ANY GUARANTEE OF COMPLIANCE WITH ANY OBLIGATION, INCLUDING FEDERAL OR STATE LAWS AND REGULATIONS. NEITHER THE UPS STORE, INC. NOR THIS THE UPS STORE LOCATION SHALL BE LIABLE FOR ANY DAMAGES OF ANY KIND, HOWEVER CAUSED.  
Copyright © 2016 The UPS Store, Inc. MS410\_6050415



This grey-green paint was common in pre-Colonial homes.

Pre-colonial homes were often insulated with a mixture of mud, clay and straw known as "dawb."

This decorative fixture is an acorn drop, found in some very old homes in the area.

Nancy Thompson photos

architectural history.

His knowledge extends far beyond architecture and into the history of central Connecticut and 17th and 18th century society.

Two buildings he's working on at the moment once housed General Rochambeau's officers while he was meeting in Wethersfield with George Washington to plan what turned out to be the final battle of the American Revolution. Rochambeau himself stayed in a home in East Hartford that has been moved to Guilford and restored.

Bielitz knows the whole story

**"Even if a building is in a new location, I think it's better to save it than have it end up on the trash heap."**

**-Steve Bielitz**

in detail and loves the fact that he is walking on the very same floorboards that once were trod by French officers on their way to Yorktown.

He's had a hand in the restoration of the Robbins sisters' house

in Old Wethersfield and many others and has worked with about 30 museums in the state as well as with the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the Office of the State Archaeologist.

Locally, he recently dismantled

the "House house" once owned by the House family at the corner of Hebron Avenue and House Street, saving it from destruction when the new Glastonbury Place development was built. It has been put in storage until he can find a buyer who wants to rebuild it.

Bielitz would rather see a building restored on site but is philosophical about the options.

"Even if a building is in a new location, I think it's better to save it than have it end up on the trash heap," he said.

Bielitz is well known and well

## PARADISE LOST?

**Refinish,  
Re-Strap,  
Re-Sling,  
Recycle &  
Save...**



**Patio Furniture Restoration Experts**

Please send photos for a quote to  
[chaircareinfo@aol.com](mailto:chaircareinfo@aol.com)

FACTORY  
AUTHORIZED



SERVICING  
ALL BRANDS

- Brown Jordan, • Knoll, • Tropitone, • Woodard
- Molla, • Winston, • Salterini

**1-800-809-4494**

80 Kendall Street, New Haven, CT 06512

**Large color selection • Pickup & Delivery**



**ADDISON VILLAGE  
DENTAL**

Family & Aesthetic Dentistry

Gabriela Vatafu, DDS • Lucian Vatafu, DDS

**New Patients Welcomed**

- Most Dental Insurance Accepted -

**New Patient Special:**

FREE Take Home  
Whitening Strips Kit

**SPECIAL OFFERS:**

**\$499 Package:**

Includes In Office Whitening  
AND

Take Home Whitening Kit  
(includes custom trays & whitening gel)

A \$750 value!



**Sign & Save with our Smile Savings Program**

NO Yearly Maximums. NO Deductibles.

NO Claims or Preauthorization Forms. NO Waiting Periods.

Certified Invisalign Provider  **invisalign**  
The Clear Alternative to Braces

969 Hebron Avenue, Glastonbury • **860-430-9860**

We speak  
Spanish!

Please visit our website:

**[www.addisonvillagedental.com](http://www.addisonvillagedental.com)**

respected in his field.

Rick Krynick, owner of Colonial Woodworkers on Oak Street, has known him for about 30 years.

"He has always had great enthusiasm and passion for saving old houses," he said. "He knows once they are gone, they are gone forever. Steve is a very knowledgeable historian on old houses. I have worked with Steve on numerous restoration projects. He comes in with his expert advice on restoration and I would execute the replication of necessary details to complete the project. Through detailed drawings and conversation, we come up with the best plan for restoring a small doorway to an entire house.

"It is always joy to scope out an old house with Steve. As an architectural historian, Steve is always looking for the small details of long ago that will give him clues as what the house used to look like many years ago. He still gets excited over the smallest details and finds he comes across. He takes it very personally when he is unable to save a house or barn."

Jim Bennett, executive director of the Historical Society of Glastonbury, has known Bielitz and his work for two decades.

"He has been a big supporter of the Historical Society of Glastonbury, sharing his knowledge and expertise regarding historic architecture, their proper care, maintenance and restoration. He has been a huge help when issues have arisen regarding society's historic buildings, the Welles-Shipman-Ward house, 1755, and the Welles-Chapman Tavern, 1776. He has also been a tremendous help and resource regarding the historic structures within Glastonbury's five National Register Historic Districts and its local historic district."

Bennett and others in the society have been so impressed with Bielitz's expertise and work that they have invited him to be on the society's board of directors as chair of the society's preservation committee.

"His knowledge of architecture goes deeper than just the history of buildings but includes its large and



Nancy Thompson photo

This building in East Hartford dates back to 1698.

small elements such as how they were built, the source materials, design, and so on," Bennett continued. "He leaves no rock unturned. In addition, he has a tremendous work ethic. He is always out there in the

field whether in Glastonbury or neighboring towns advocating for and rationalizing to the powers that be the reasons for saving Connecticut's historic architectural treasures."

**WILLIAM RAVEIS**  
REAL ESTATE • MORTGAGE • INSURANCE

**REAL ESTATE REFINED**



**860.463.9296**  
[www.BodeauRealtyGroup.com](http://www.BodeauRealtyGroup.com)



Jeff Bodeau



Diane Vest



Desi Meister



Kayla Suprin



Jessica Blancato

**Hope you are enjoying the summer!**

### “Discoveries of a lifetime”

Bielitz was working recently on two old homes, one in East Hartford and one elsewhere, when he made what he described as “the discoveries of a lifetime for a person in my occupation.”

He called in Bill Flynt of Historic Deerfield to do a dendrochronology – the study of tree ring growth patterns to date the age of archeological timbers to within six months – of wood used in both houses. Flynt determined that the trees were cut in the winter of 1697-1698.

Bielitz is not ready to identify one of the houses, but the other, in East Hartford, was built for

John Goodwin. Flynt’s research has shown that Goodwin acquired land in East Hartford in January, 1697, and apparently immediately began felling trees to build the house.

The other house, thought to be equally old, appears to have ties to several important figures in history: Jane Seymour, the only wife of Henry VIII to be buried with him; the Duke of Somerset – by coincidence the county where Glastonbury, UK, is; the 18th-century Wadsworth family, which included Joseph Wadsworth, who is said to have hidden the state’s constitution in what became known as the Charter Oak; and

Oliver Wendell Holmes of Massachusetts, father of the Oliver Wendell Holmes who served on the U.S. Supreme Court for decades, and as chief justice of the United States in 1920 at the end of his career.

When asked what about the two old houses was most important to him, Bielitz smiled. “They’re both significant for the date and the framing and the fact that they have survived.” **GL**

*Photos and more information about Steve Bielitz’s work can be found on Facebook at Glastonbury Restoration Company. He can be reached by phone at 860-212-3750 or by email at [stevebielitz@yahoo.com](mailto:stevebielitz@yahoo.com).*



Steve Bielitz shows where laths were attached to the wall so plaster could be added.

## WE DO REPAIRS!



- ALL PHONES
- ALL TABLETS
- ALL CARRIERS!



**WIRELESS ZONE<sup>®</sup>**  
is a Verizon Authorized Retailer.

Save **\$20** on any purchase.

\*One per Customer with purchase of \$30 or more. Does not include wireless service.  
See store for details. Expires September 30th.

**NEW LOCATION IN GLASTONBURY**

2450 Main Street | Glastonbury, CT 06033 | (860)262-9999