

## ON THE MARKET

## Oh, the people who have called this place home!

**F**or every type of house that this historic estate is known to have been, perhaps the most significant incarnation lies in what it isn't known to have been — a shrouded stopover for runaway slaves riding the proverbial rails of the Underground Railroad. The fact is, since its 1786 creation, this lofty Colonial Revival has transformed numerous times and for numerous purposes. The 4,500-square foot home with seven bedrooms and six bathrooms began as a parsonage house of the holy, then became a boarding house for a local girls' school, and has finally established itself as a private residence. This much is certain. What is less certain, what is but a rumor but still a rumor with merit, is how this manse in a quieter part of Litchfield harbors one of the noblest secrets surrounding any pre-Civil War shelter. "Various people have told me it was on the Underground Railroad, but I can't say I'm really sure of that," said owner Andrea Keogh, who has lived in the house for five years. "My understand-



There have been numerous renovations to the home over the years, such as this light-filled bathroom.

ing is that (neighbor) Harriet Beecher Stowe was involved in the (Underground Railroad), and there seem to be some places here to hide people very easily." It is quite a big home, after all. But according to the Litchfield Historical Society, the home's status as a safe house stands as an unverifiable rumor. Whether it was or it wasn't, the house is still a place rich with twists. In 1987, Mary Elizabeth McCahon of the Greater Litchfield Preservation Trust detailed its varied history in a submission for recognition that she made to the Connecticut Historical Commission. "Remembered as the former Congregational Church parsonage, the central chimney house was built in 1786 by joiner Reuben Webster," McCahon stated. "It was later used by Aunt Bull as a famous boarding house for girls attending nearby Miss Pierce's School, in operation from 1792 until 1833." On Prospect Street, this was a house for the holy and a house for the educated, but it soon became a house for local law enforcement. "It was purchased by real estate speculator Sylvester Spencer and occupied by Albert Sedgwick after he retired as sheriff in 1854," she continued. That is about the time when the home pivoted to a regular one-family residence. One that, according to listing agent Donna Membrino, has seen several renovations but "is still true to its origins." The kitchen, bathrooms, and living spaces were updated, but the home still boasts a grand central hallway; and a bright family room now has access to a pool, patio, and professionally landscaped outdoor living spaces. But apparently, as was stated in the Connecticut Historic Commission submission, the current residents weren't the first to make changes. According to McCahon, "the central chimney was removed and replaced by an interior and exterior chimney. The bellcast kick of the gable roof appears to be a Colonial Revival addition, as is the flat-roofed Tuscan-columned entrance porch and tripartite door surround." For all that is unverifiable, this home is verifiably remarkable.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

This 18th century Colonial was a church parsonage, then a boarding house, and is now a private home.

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## IN THE DETAILS

Listing: William Pitt

Sotheby's International Realty

Price: \$1,395,000

Bedrooms: 7 Baths: 6

Acreage: 2.75

Year built: 1786

Do you have a home for sale with a story? We'd love to tell it. Share with Alec Johnson at [ajohnson@rep-am.com](mailto:ajohnson@rep-am.com)

— Jack Coraggio —

## Horses step out for spring



**T**he Humane Organization Representing Suffering Equines, H.O.R.S.E. of Connecticut, will hold a Spring Horse Parade on Saturday April 14, from 1 to 3 p.m., allowing people interested in adopting, leasing, sponsoring, or volunteering, to meet the fabulous horses, aged 5 to 29, mini to draft, available for advanced-beginner to experienced riders. The leasing program is for people over 18 who ride regularly and want to find out what is involved in caring for a horse; adoption is

## Classical realism shown in Roxbury

**C**ynthia Zinser, seen here, will present her figure studies and still life paintings in Roxbury, when "Pulled into Light" opens

