

REAL ESTATE

LUXURY LIVING

Homes with Antique Character and Local Lore

Greenwich luxury homes pre-dating 1900 give buyers the opportunity to carry on their residential legacy



Contributed Photo

The Levi Ireland House, a designated Greenwich Landmark, is offered to the market for \$4.995 million. Broker Kevin Sneddon and his team at Compass represent the seller, who will accept cryptocurrency for the sale of this property.

By Gretchen A. Peck

Architecturally speaking, the East Coast has the benefit of age, with residences that date back to the nation’s Victorian and Colonial periods. This week, Greenwich Time takes readers inside three distinctive Greenwich homes, all built prior to 1900 and presently on the market.

The Levi Ireland House at 241 Bedford Rd., Greenwich, is for sale. The owner is asking \$4.995 million for the landmark property and will notably accept cryptocurrency as payment. Broker Kevin Sneddon of Compass is the seller’s agent.

Levi Ireland was born in 1795 in New York City and settled in Greenwich, where he had married into the Mead family and had two sons, according to U.S. Census data and FamilySearch.org. He lived in Greenwich until his death at age 80, and in 1835, he built this home.

Greenwich Time asked Sneddon to point to some examples of original architectural or interior elements that may be original to the house Levi Ireland built for his family.

“The original entrance to the house dates back to 1835, as do the floors in this part of the house, which include the foyer, the living room, and the study,” Sneddon explained. “There are also original exposed beams in this part of the house.

“Outside, there is an original horse hitching post, an original well, plus some original stone walls,” Sneddon added. “Also, the vintage barn pre-dates the house, as it was built in the 1700s.”

Realtor Leslie McElwreath describes 42 Old Church Road — the Mills-Fitch House — as a “Napoleon III-style grand dame.” The six-bedroom, 8,077-square-foot luxury home debuted in 1710 and has been re-

markably renovated by its current owners, who have now offered it to the market for \$6.995 million.

Their vision for the renovation work, according to McElwreath, was to “integrate today’s luxury appointments with its original period identity.” Mission accomplished. The interiors exude character and craftsmanship, with eight fireplaces, a gourmet kitchen and a balance of formal entertaining and informal spaces for day-to-day living. Outdoors, among the 0.95-acre grounds, earnest buyers will discover lovely landscaping, a pool and expansive terraces, appended with an outdoor fireplace and grilling station.

Published by the Greenwich Historical Society, a Greenwich Landmark Series publication about the Mills-Fitch House, authored by Susan Nova, tells the property’s origin story: “Samuel Mills came from Long Island to Greenwich in 1710 and was given permission to operate a house of public entertaining, and ‘retail strong drinks,’ when he wasn’t working as a saddler.”

In 1734, Jacob Fitch — Samuel Mills grandson, who would serve as a captain and colonel during the American Revolution — acquired the property

While Samuel Mills built the house, it was its second owners who transformed it further in 1871, renovating and expanding it, and moving it to its new location, just 1.5 miles from Greenwich Avenue.

In 1853 Banksville residents erected a church at 1035 North Street, the Banksville Baptist Church.

A 1994 edition of the Greenwich Historical Society’s newsletter recounted, “There was a sizable congregation for Sunday services, an active Sunday School, and social activities, such as strawberry festivals and picnics.” The newsletter also chronicled how the church bell rang

out in celebration on November 11, 1918, Armistice Day, when WWI came to an end. Though the bell is now silent and the church is no longer a church, their legacy endures in a new way. The bell is now on display on the front lawn, and the church lives on as a unique, modern home — offered to the market for \$1.65 million.

Realtor Liz Forrest of Douglas Elliman Real Estate is the sellers’ agent. Her clients are just the second owners to own this property as a residence.

Inside, the sanctuary has been transformed into a dramatic interior living space, with modern personality and lots of display space for fine art. A previous owner was an accomplished artist, who leveraged the lower level as an art studio.

In the sanctuary great room there are 20-foot walls and 16-foot windows, reaching up to the pitched roofline.

“The interior was masterfully reimagined and thoughtfully designed to utilize and maximize the space while creating an undeniably inspiring, comfortable and artistic design aesthetic,” Forrest suggested.

The exterior of the church has not only been retained, it’s been restored.

“The project took one year to design and one year to construct. It was completed in 2007,” Forrest explained. “The renovations were done to the highest standard, including removing the steeple with a crane, so it could be properly restored on the ground before being reinstalled atop.

“The interior was taken down to the ribs of the structure, so the architects from Gray Organschi could see exactly what they would be working with. The idea was to keep the simple, dignified historic building, and let it serve as an envelope for the interior transformation,” she said.



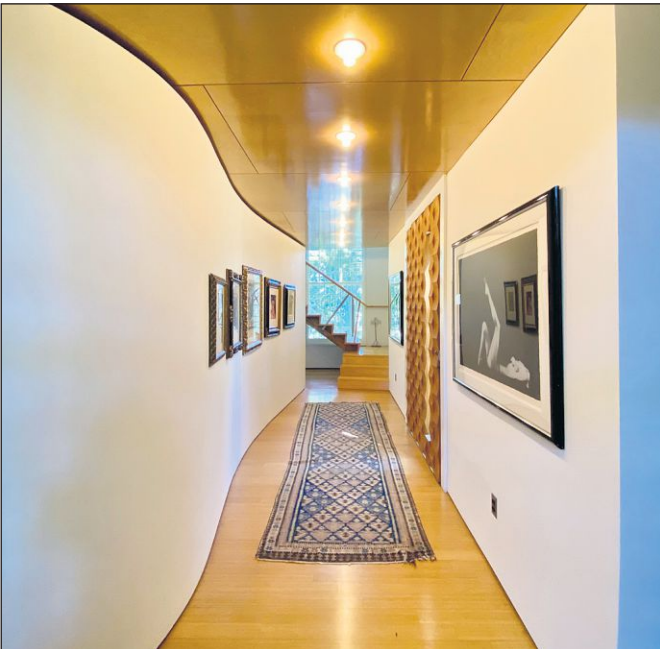
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Originally built in 1710, the Mills-Fitch House is offered to the market for \$6.995 million. Sotheby’s International Realty is the seller’s listing agency.

While the home still very much looks like a place of worship outside, the white cedar front door, which appears to be “undulating,” according to Forrest, was inspired by the décor at a beloved sushi bar in Japan. It signals that a special home awaits inside.

The house has 2,418 square feet of living space today, with two bedrooms and two baths. Just inside the front door is a foyer with a visually engaging S-curved wall. The custom fireplace is framed by Neapolitan bamboo, and an oversized Venetian chandelier dangles overhead.

“This home is as much a work of art as it is a showcase for it,” Forrest concluded.



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An S-curved wall is visually striking as you enter the foyer of the 2,418-square-foot home at 1035 North St., Greenwich.

AGENT PROFILE: FRANCINE EHRLICH

Sotheby’s Realtor Fran Ehrlich offers sage advice for buyers and sellers entering the market today

Francine Ehrlich — Fran, more familiarly — is a senior global real estate advisor with Sotheby’s International Realty in Greenwich. Ehrlich has been a professional Realtor for nearly 30 years, specializing in residential sales and rentals. In 2020, she formed a team with her Sotheby’s colleague, Helene Barre — the Barre Ehrlich Group.

This year, they expanded their group, adding Carol Zuckert and Beau Chmiel to the team, as well.

“We are a group of seasoned Realtors who offer clients a broad range of services,” Ehrlich noted. “Each of us has an expertise. I have a financial background. Helene has a design background. Carol has experience in new construction, and Beau is an architectural designer. All of us work together to ensure that our clients have every advantage.”



Contributed Photo
Francine Ehrlich

Prior to real estate, Ehrlich earned a bachelor’s degree in education and served as vice president at a leading Wall Street investment firm. Before joining Sotheby’s International Realty’s Greenwich brokerage, she was affiliated with the Preferred Properties brokerage.

She is credited with the sale of “Clifton,” the highest-listed property in Greenwich at the time, and after a year in which she had sales in excess of \$110 million, she was recognized among the Real Estate Top 200 by The Wall Street Journal’s “REAL Trends.”

Ehrlich has been a longtime Greenwich resident. She moved here from New York City in 1989. For 15 years, her family lived “south of the Parkway” before settling in backcountry in 2004. She’s been an engaged citizen of the community, through memberships and volunteer work at local institutions like the Greenwich Jewish Foundation, Greenwich Hospital, private golf clubs, and public and private schools.

Ehrlich is a proud mother of a son and daughter. Her daughter attended Choate, where Ehrlich served on the Board, and went on to both Yale and NYU’s law school. Her son is a graduate of Greenwich High School and Columbia University.

Asked about how she might counsel buyers and

sellers who are navigating the market today, or soon will be, Ehrlich explained, “For sellers, it is important to look at where we seem to be going, rather than where we’ve been, in establishing list prices for their properties. I believe that buyers need to assess for themselves the enormous amount of predictive data. Once they have a view on ‘least likely, likely and most likely’ scenarios, they can look at their own financial position and determine the best course of action.”

“I believe it is important to keep in mind that Greenwich real estate is not fungible,” she continued. “If a buyer sees a property that truly suits their needs, and they can afford the purchase, not pursuing this property in order to wait for expected lower prices may be counterproductive, as once this home sells, it may long feel like ‘the one that got away.’”

Ehrlich says the right house will “make one’s heart sing” when driving home at the end of the day.

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SOUND OFF: BARBARA DALY

There are signs of local market slowdown and indication that the balance of power may be shifting slightly

The oft-honored professor at the Wharton School of Business, G. Richard Shell, wrote, “In markets, you gain leverage by your power to walk away.” Historically, nowhere has this been more true than in residential real estate markets. The events of the past two years changed the paradigm in the Greenwich real estate market. The influx of new buyers looking to escape the restrictions and claustrophobia of COVID-19 in New York City created a seller’s market unlike any we’ve seen in recent years. But where do we stand now, and has the balance shifted?

The market today is down 35% from a year ago. The number of listings is down. Those listings that do come to market, if priced appropriately, move very quickly — often, with several backup offers. Families are still coming out from the city. While not in numbers seen earlier, the evolving world of remote work has attracted buyers who never wished for a five-day commute, now can get by on two days or none at all. All of this suggests that

it is still a seller’s market, but not to the extent that it was.

What does this mean for buyers and sellers in the current environment? For buyers, make sure to have your financing squared away and be ready to move quickly. Remember the 80/20 rule: If you are satisfied with 80% of the outcome, you have been successful.

For sellers, price your home fairly, and make sure it presents well.

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Contributed Photo
Barbara Daly



COLDWELL BANKER REALTY

GRACEFUL LIVING AT ITS BEST



682 Lake Avenue, Greenwich

This beautifully landscaped Georgian Colonial is ready to be enjoyed by the next generation. Wonderfully maintained and updated, this approximately 7,198 square foot home on 1.82 acres provides multiple living areas for entertaining and informal living. With its large eat in kitchen, butler’s pantry, formal dining room and living room plus family room, paneled media room and office with adjoining private bar, the first floor allows ample space for today’s discerning buyer. The second floor boasts a primary bedroom with two bathrooms, dressing room and two walk in closets, an additional 6 bedrooms, three ensuite and kitchenette. A large workout room, finished lower level with added square footage, mudroom and heated three car garage completes the picture of practicality and charm. With multiple outdoor seating areas, master vegetable garden, extensive mature specimen plantings plus a separate vintage artist studio with fireplace, this home is the ideal midtown retreat.



LISTED: \$6,200,000



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