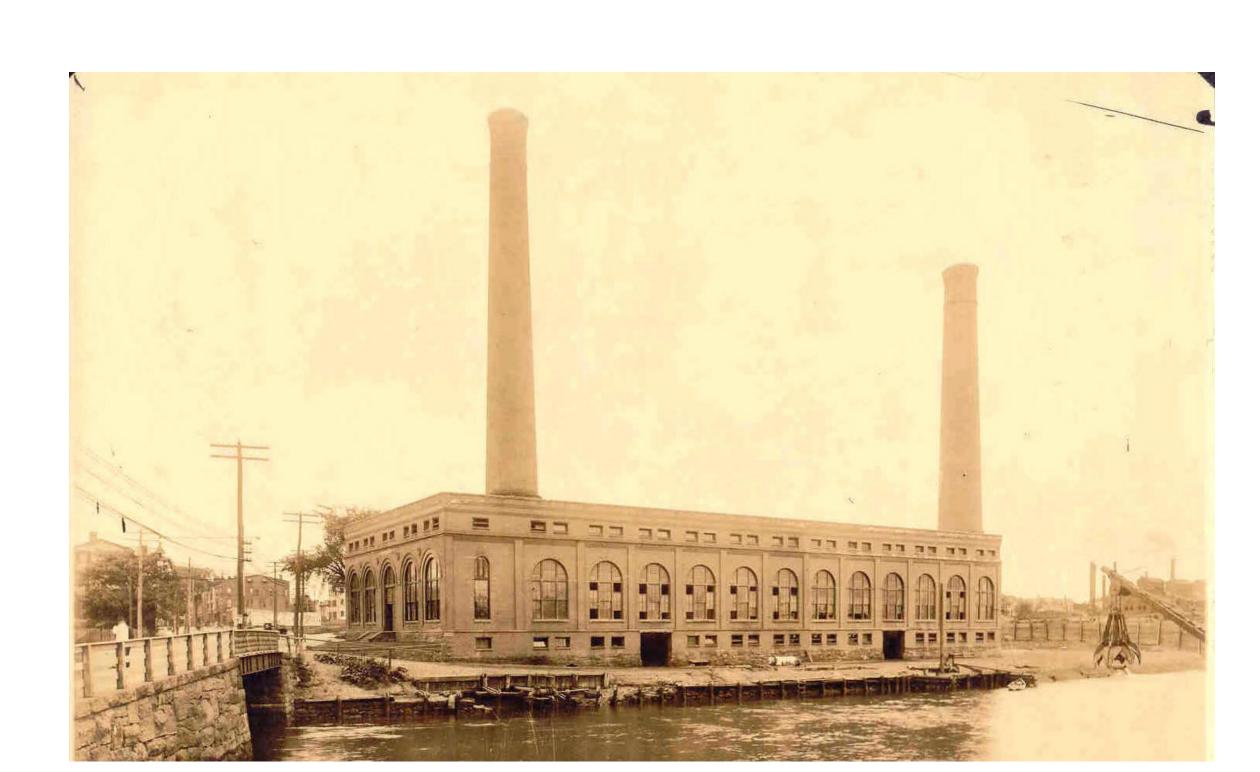
Off The Rails:

Exploring the Legacy of the Streetcar in New Haven Orli Hakanoğlu

Historic Background



Powerhouse Building, 1903



Powerhouse Building, 2019 458 Grand Avenue

What is this building?

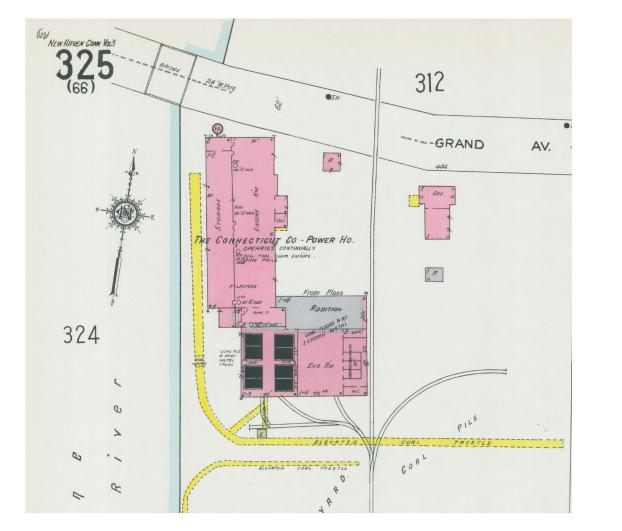
There was a time when electrified streetcars rattled along many of New Haven's streets. They were part of an extensive transportation system that operated not only in New Haven, but also in much of Connecticut. It was the energy inside this building, today known as The Powerhouse Building, that powered The Connecticut Company's extensive streetcar system. This efficient and affordable transit system played an important role in the history and growth of New Haven, largely due to its role in connecting New Haven's working class residents to their places of work in the downtown industrial buildings in the early 20th century.

The Powerhouse Building is located at 458 Grand Avenue in Fair Haven, which provides a point of entry into this larger transit system. Built at the turn of the 20th century, this remarkable two story brick building once housed ten upright boilers and three 500-volt generators that provided much of the electricity that powered New Haven's extensive streetcar system. Two prominent chimney stacks rose high above the skyline, lending the building prominence and recognizability from afar.

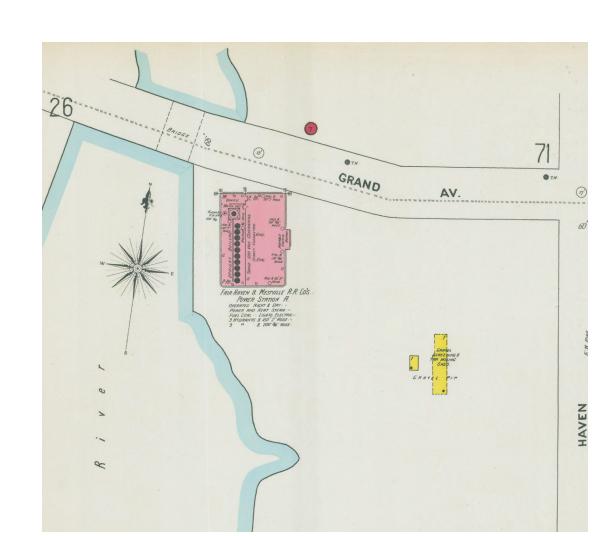
A look at the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps shows us how the building evolved in its form and function through the years. In recent years it has been used as a warehouse and a brewery. It was renovated by Stuart Lathers Architects in 2014 and today is used as loft-style commercial office and studio space.



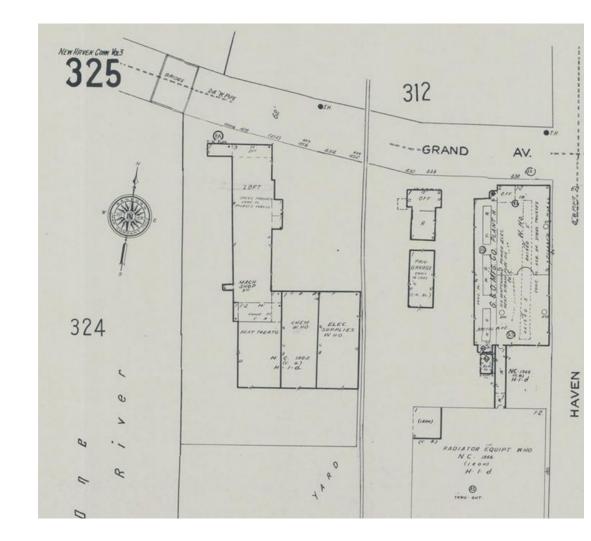
1886: Not yet built



1924: The Connecticut Co - Power House
Operates Continually. Engine Room Addition, Connected to Elevated
Coal Trestle



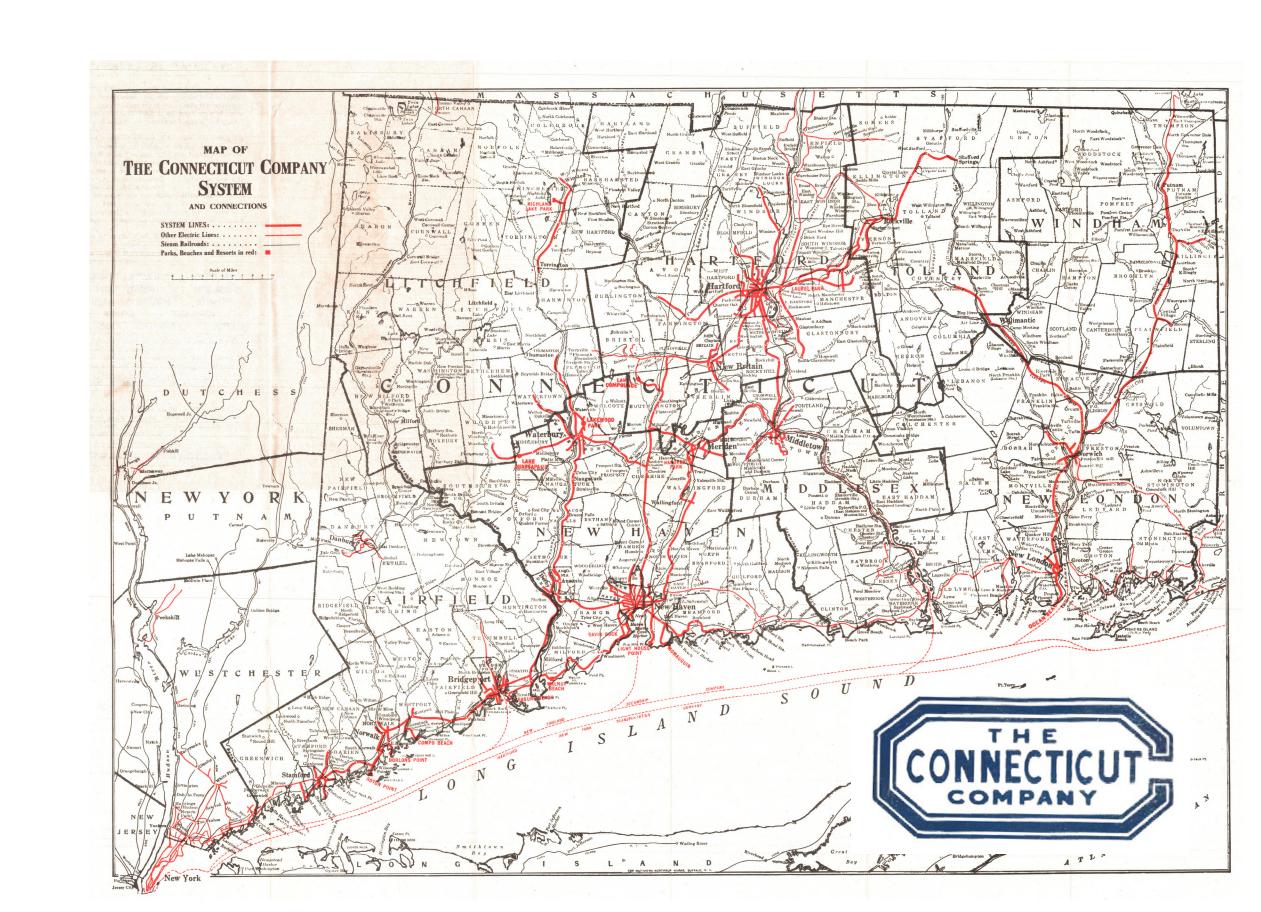
1901: Fair Haven and Westville RR Co's Station A Description: Operated Night and Day. 10 Upright Boilers. Fuel: Coal. Lights: Electric. Power and Heat: Steam





About New Haven's Streetcar System

New Haven was actually just one node within a larger constellation of interconnected streetcar lines operated by the Connecticut Company. This 1920 map shows the Connecticut Company System, with its lines demarcated in red.



Analyzing the density of the red line, we can see that Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury, Meriden, Middletown, and Hartford were all active cities serviced by the streetcar lines, and that connections between them suggest a broader system of industrial connectivity and shared production.

In 1907, the Connecticut Company purchased and began to operate the extensive lines and leased properties from the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad Company, taking over leases for other regional lines such as the Fair Haven and Westville Railroad Company. It used a canary yellow visual identity on its cars to represent the consolidation of all of the different rail companies it now managed.



A Connecticut Co. Car at the Branford Trolley Museum

from the East Haven Green to Branford. Over the next ten years, some trolley service was extended, some discontinued.

To say that motor coach service made a quick takeover would be inaccurate; trolley service was still active in the thirties, and then revitalized during the war years, with some lines even being re-opened because of wartime industry, such as the in New Haven had been converted to motor coach operation largely for financial reasons. The New Haven Division completed its motorization on September 26th,

How the Streetcar Shaped the City

Much of New Haven's manufacturing required thousands of workers. The workforce needed to be concentrated around these industrial operations, and so dense housing grew surrounding the city center. The streetcars played a critical role in this growth. Ira M. Leonard in "The Rise of Metropolitan New Haven, 1860-1980," described transportation as the spinal cord of New Haven, arguing that it shaped New Haven's economic vitality as well as its geographical expansion and particular urban form.

In Building Suburbia, architectural historian Dolores Hayden explains how from the 1870s onward, subdividers of land near city centers provided dense linear real estate developments along expanding transit lines. Owners subdivided large tracts of their land into narrow parcels and built single family, two family, and three family dwellings. These streetcar buildouts provided a new model of living for "skilled workers and people of modest middle-class status" somewhere between picturesque countryside outside of the city and the inner city tenements.

Urban historian Douglas Rae notes that New Haven's present-day housing stock is largely a result of the centered industrial development that boomed in new Haven from 1840-1920. Throughout New Haven, we see very similar looking homes lined up densely along streets that were adjacent or near to streetcar lines.

A Case Study: The Story of Hubinger Street

With the help of the New Haven Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, we can track a large parcel of land's transformation from a horse racing track into a quintessential streetcar suburb. In 1911, we see that the large racing track sits within subdivisions, and by 1924, the track is gone and those subdivisions are filled with nearly identical dense rows of typical New Haven multi-family homes. Hubinger must have recognized the strategic location of his large land parcel - bracketed by Whalley and Edgewood Avenues, both of which were serviced by trolley lines. Additionally, the area was immediately adjacent to Edgewood Park, and would have provided the residents with a quasi-suburban lifestyle, tucked away from hustle and bustle at the city's center.





New Haven Streetcar Heritage Trail

Signage

A series of plaques along the former sites of the Connecticut Company system in New Haven will serve as physical markers of the ghosted network within the city. As the Sanborn Maps indicate, the system was comprised of a series of Train Car Barns, Storage Facilities, the Powerhouse, and plots of land owned and rented out by the Connecticut Company. The signage provides an entry point into learning line, Chapel Street line), is to be painted a different color. more about the history of each site and ignites awareness of how each site was part of a much larger system that is part and parcel to New Haven's industrial heritage and development as a city.

Each sign locates visitors along the trail with respect to New Haven's streetcar system and provides a brief description of each site and its purpose within the network and what former streetcar route they are standing on. The plaques also streetcar system. invite viewers to download the walking tour app, which provides directions and maps to a self-guided walking tour of the heritage trail.

Street Painting

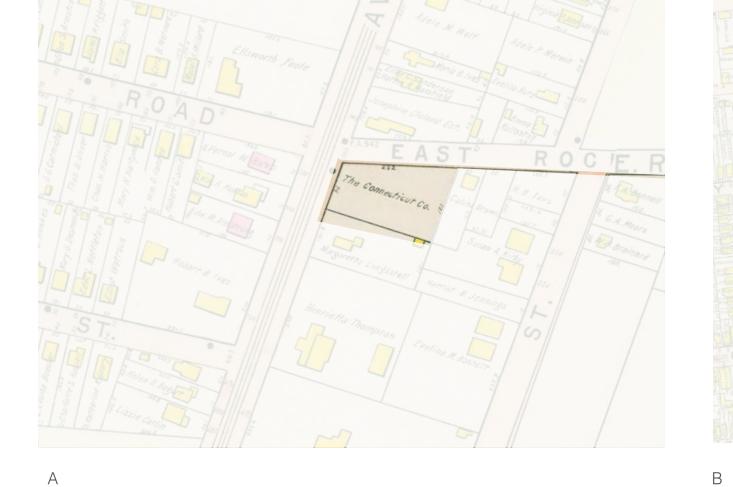
Another physical intervention is subtle street painting treatment on the streets upon which streetcars once operated. According to feasibility, either the face of bright color to indicate the former street car routes. Each line (i.e. Whalley Avenue

Individuals throughout the city may start to notice these painted streets and develop a curiosity to understand what the colors reference. Encountering the plaques at each of the sites along the trail will provide the answer. Once New Haven visitors and residents become aware of what the street painting signifies, their day to day motion throughout the city will allow them to build a mental map of the city's former

Walking Tour App

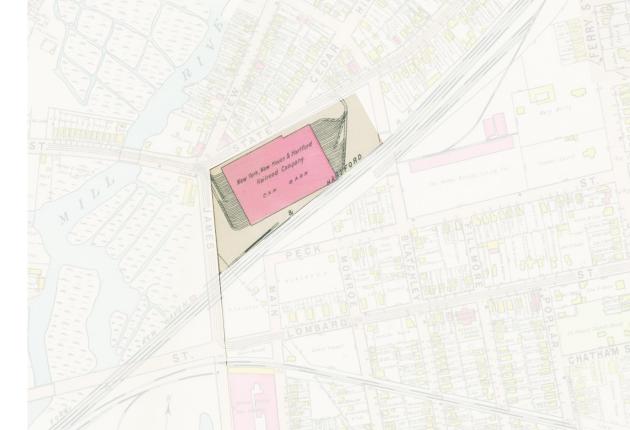
The final aspect of the Walking Tour is an app whose purpose is to provide additional information and background for those who would like to learn more about the buildings along the trail. It also provides directions for a self-guided walking tour along each of the different streetcar routes.

The app would provide an overall map and locate individuals within it so they can follow the map. It would also provide historic images such as Sanborn Maps of the site through time and any other relevant information.

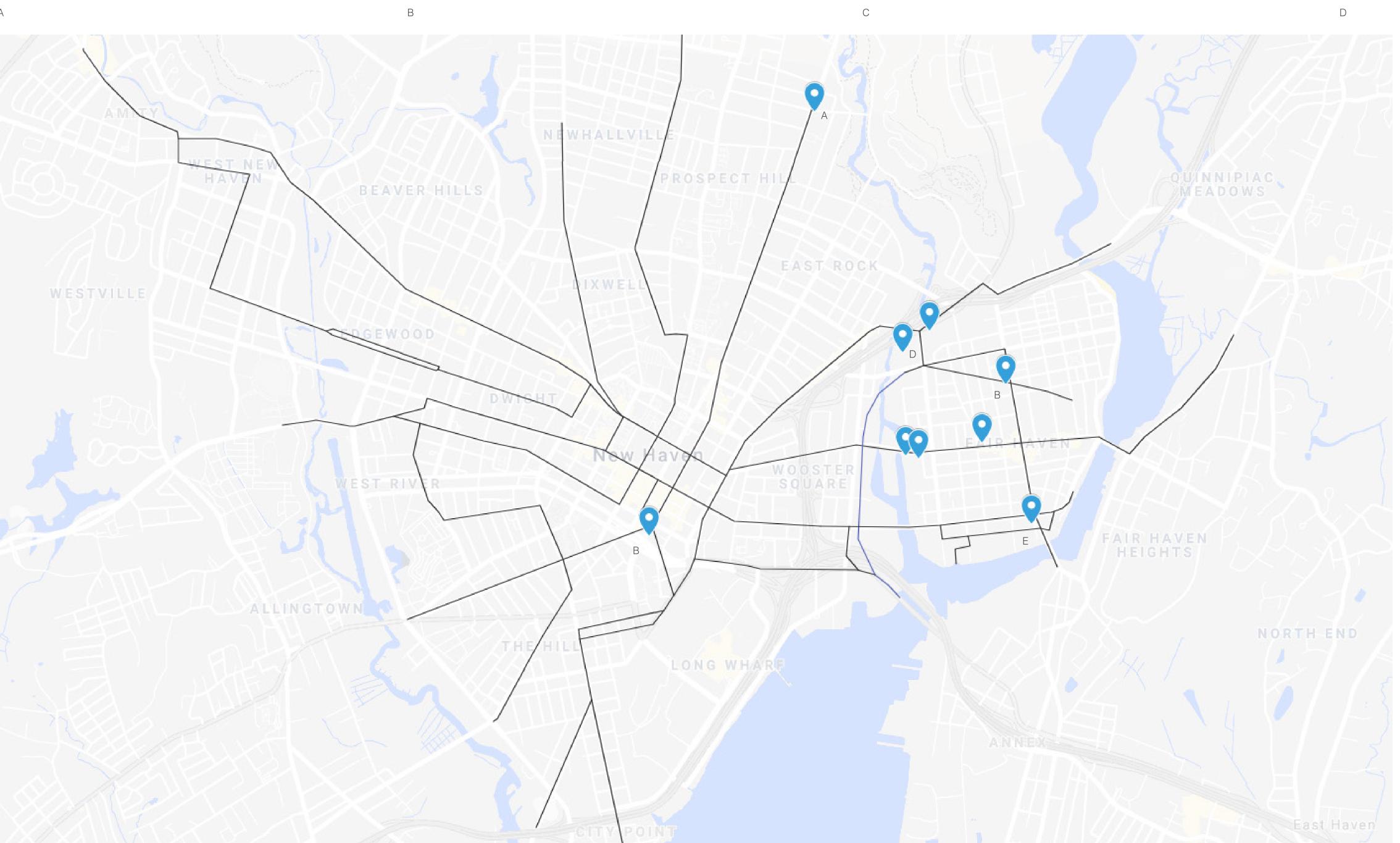


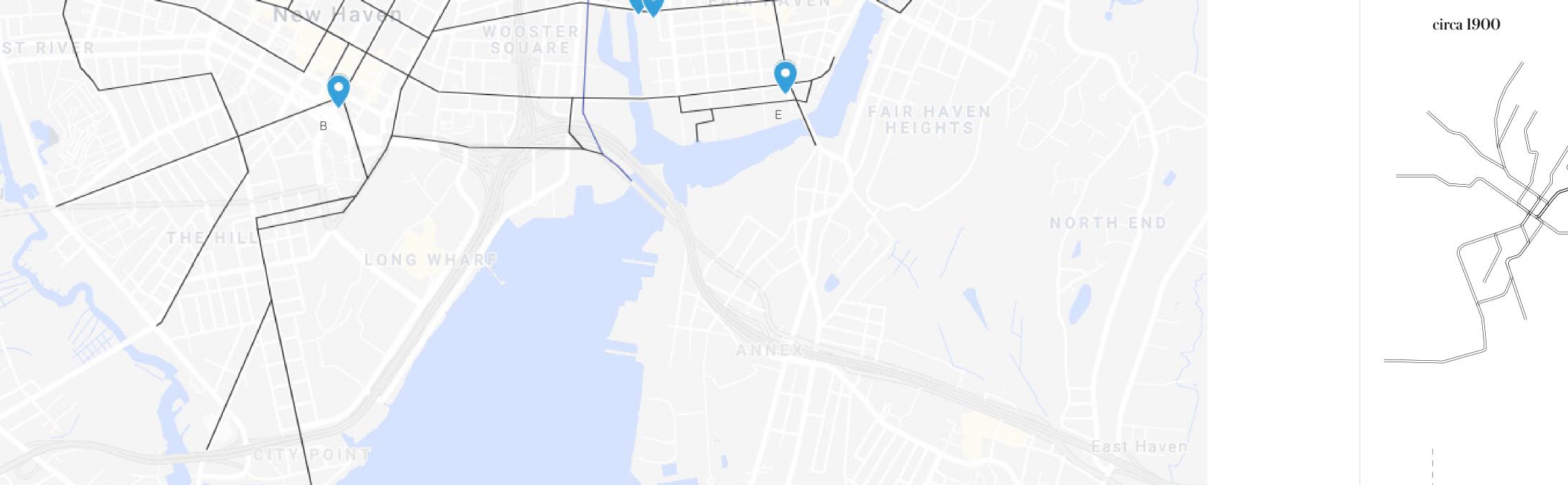


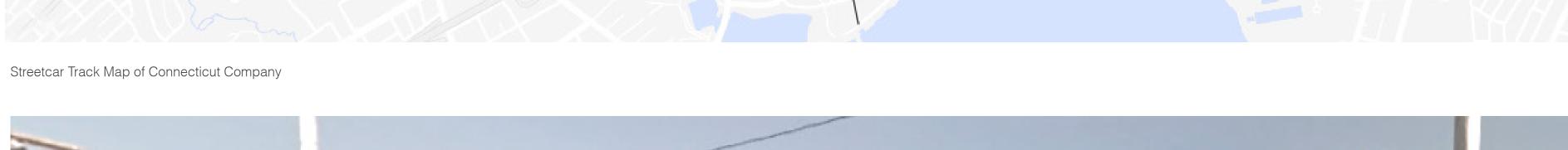






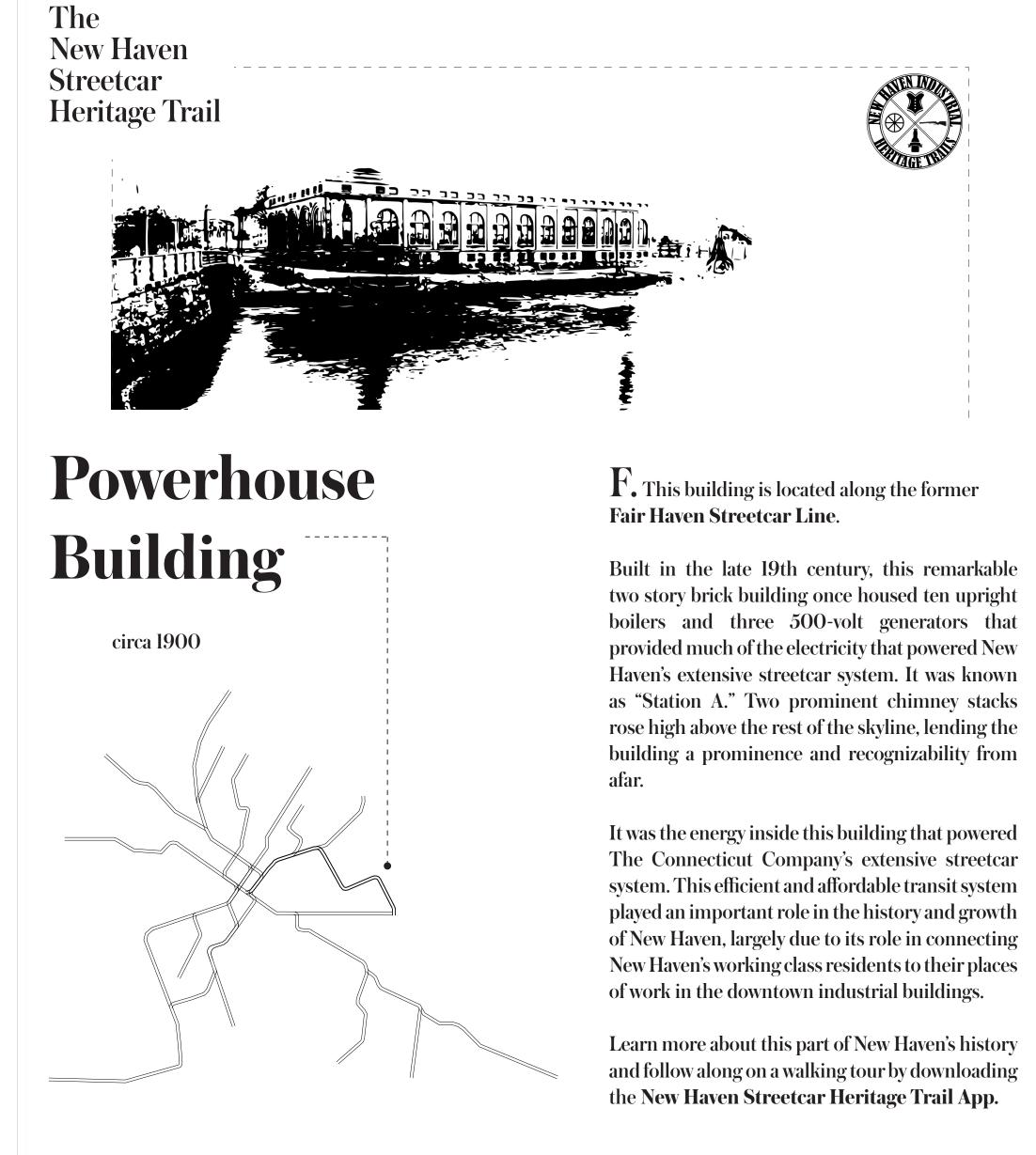




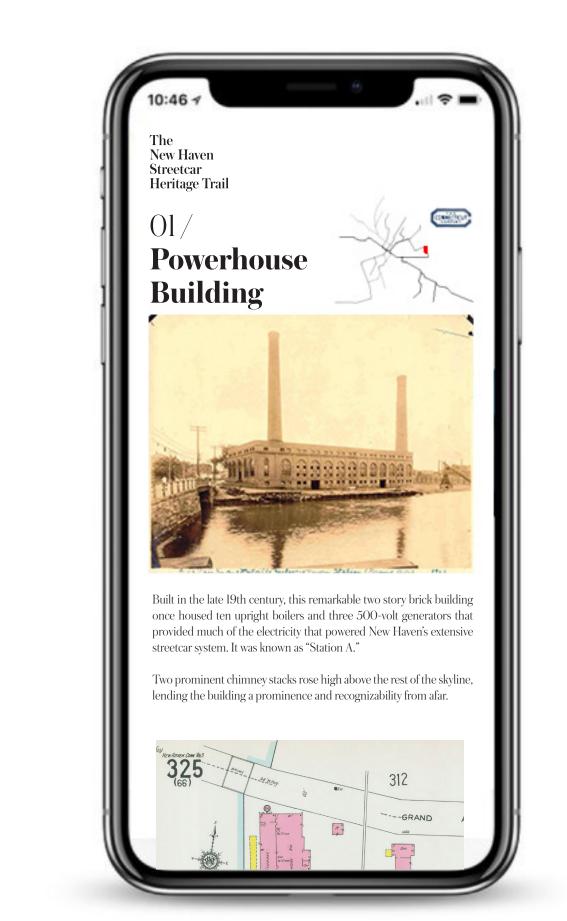


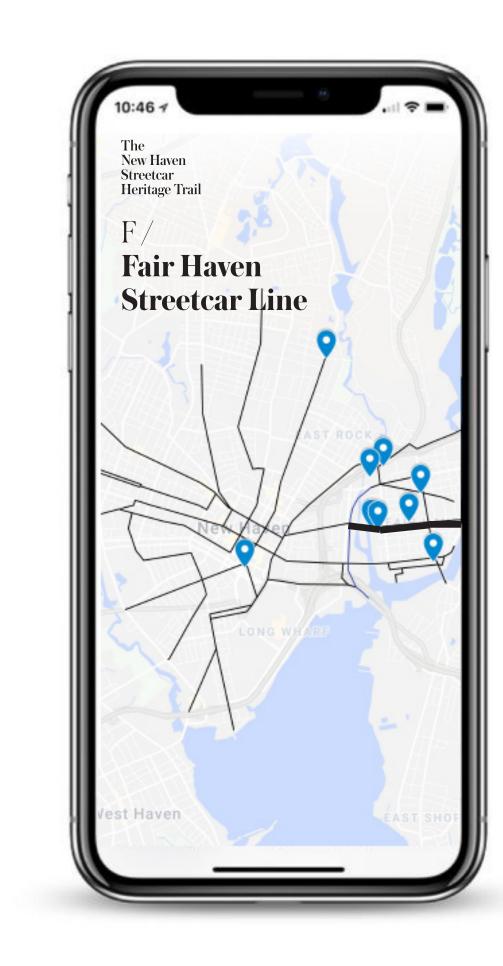


Rendering: Powerhouse Building, shown with street paint and plaque



Signage System





App Screen Grab