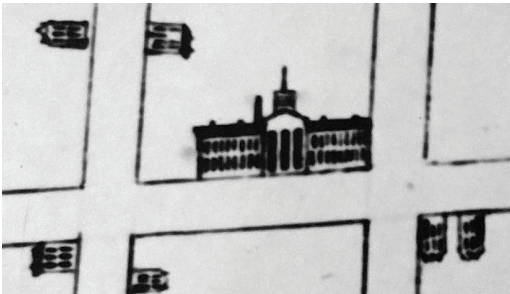


**The New Haven Clock Factory  
133 Hamilton St New Haven**

**1853-2016**



133 Hamilton St

From 1842 to 1960, The New Haven Clock Company's manufacturing operations were housed in the redbrick buildings at St. John and Hamilton Streets. This was the site of large-scale industrial production. Once one of the nineteenth century's foremost timepiece manufacturers, after a post-World War II decline, the factory finally closed in 1960.

While the end of the New Haven Clock Company parallels the broader industrial decline in New Haven, the building that still stands at 133 Hamilton Street did not remain empty, nor did it go unused in the years after the company's closure. In fact, under the ownership of Tony Yagovane, it provided a space for an ever-changing cast of characters working and living in the crumbling remains of the former factory. A set of buildings that were agglomerated over time as the watch industry expanded, after the company's closure, the building and its surrounding area is paradigmatic of larger urban processes that affected New Haven: urban renewal, extensive demolition, fires, and neglect. What remains on the site is a mere fragment of what was once a much larger complex of industrial buildings in a much denser industrial and residential sector around the Mill River.

Like the re-purposing of industrial spaces by artists throughout the United States, the former-industrial building on Hamilton Street was marked by a overlapping and sometimes contradictory narratives, serving as a locus for informal activity, artistic production, play, and a host of activities often deemed less than proper. Due to its location and vacancy it became the site for much of New Haven's "underbelly." That is, for people who wanted to live and work outside the confines of a traditional family apartment, taking advantage of large open spaces without worrying about neighbors, they could do it for cheap and the former clock factory provided an ideal space. Nevertheless, it has also been the site of controversial and even tragic events, from the unfortunate death of a loft tenant, to shootings and robberies. The presence of nightclubs, stripper bars and other seedy activities, has characterized the building wedged between the highway and the Mill River. 133 Hamilton is in something of a no-man's land, stuck between two prominent geographical dividers.

The following images and writing represent a first chapter in what deserves to be a far more extensive investigation of the way one building can frame industrial decline, urban renewal, and the re-purposing of industrial spaces. It highlights the role of artists, musicians, entertainers, and craftsmen in giving life to urban areas that have been all but forgotten or relegated to peripheries by the power players of American cities.

OVER A CENTURY OF TIMEKEEPING  
THE NEW HAVEN CLOCK CO.

1880	1925	1890	1875	1900	1925	1950
						PENDULUM TIMEPIECES AND STRIKE
						PENDULUM ALARMS
						ONE AND 8-DAY BALANCE WHEEL CLOCKS
						BALANCE WHEEL ALARMS ONE AND 8-DAY
						POCKET WATCHES
						PENDULUM CHIMES
						WRIST WATCHES
						ELECTRIC CLOCKS
						JEWELLED WATCHES
						WAR PRODUCTION RADIO
						FUZE
						TIME SWITCH
						AVIATION INSTRUMENTS

**HISTORICAL RECORD OF PRODUCTION**

1817-1836  
Wooden clock movements only made in Plymouth and Bristol, Connecticut, by Chauncey Jerome.

1857  
Brass clock-works invented by Chauncey Jerome

1858  
Jerome Clock Co. reorganized as The New Haven Clock Co. 7 years after moving to New Haven.

1880  
First inexpensive watches and metal cased alarms.

1914  
World War I creates demand for men's wrist watches

1929  
Electric clocks for homes

1938  
Electric clocks for cars

1942  
World War II ends all clock and watch production



Tony Yagovane, the owner of the former Clock Factory Building

After the 1960 closure of the factory, the building on 133 Hamilton Street saw a diverse group of characters and activities including a commune, a luthier, a paper mache artist, a recording studio, band practice spaces, a punk venue, a skate park, a biker bar, numerous strip clubs, a DEA-busted marijuana growing operation, a gay bar, parties held by the Yale Art and Architecture Schools known as the Sex Ball, an R&B club attended by Cornell West. The brother of singer Michael Bolton, Orrin Bolton, recalls how his friend Dimitri Rimsky was able to pull people from all over New Haven to form a collaborative community centered around art, music, and performance. Their stories are emblematic of the kind of creative experimentation that the building facilitated. They are but one of the building's many afterlives.



Dimitri Rimsky (bottom left) and friends.

"If you broke through a floor, you could put your hand into the flooring and pull out a handful of clock parts. Dials, gears, widgets, and all sorts of stuff."  
-Dimitri Rimsky



Aerial view with East wing still standing



FACTORIES, NEW HAVEN, CONN., U. S. A.

“One day we were up in the gallery,” recalls Rimsky, “looking for something, for anything, and I put my hand up on one of the rafters. I found a 1930s pamphlet on how to become a US citizen. You have this moment where you see—here’s this sweatshop factory—some immigrant, God knows from where, would go up into the storage unit where he had a reason to spend an extended period of time. Maybe to have his lunch. And he had stashed his citizen’s pamphlet, so he could study how to become an American citizen.”



## Harp "Outraged" At Key Club Reopening

by MELISSA BAILEY | Jan 13, 2014 11:01 pm

Commenting has been closed | [E-mail the Author](#)



Liquor control agents planned to hang out at a strip club opening Monday. Meanwhile, Mayor Toni Harp said she's not happy the state is letting the club reopen at all.

The club at 133 Hamilton St., is better known under its former name, The Key Club, where mass shooter killed a young fashion designer named [Erika Robinson](#) on Oct. 26.

The club owners voluntarily suspended their liquor license after the shooting.



The Bad Ass White Boys Biker Bar (1990s). The club occupied a third-floor corner of the former factory. It served as a place for social gathering in a secluded if not hidden part of the city..





Dimitri Rimsky's mimes. Music and performance were important aspects of the small community that Rimsky described in a visit to the Yale School of Architecture on 9 May 2016.

# NEW HAVEN INDEPENDENT

ford Eagle Valley Independent Sentinel La Voz

## Occupiers Eye Clock Factory

by **NEENA SATIJA** | Oct 24, 2011 7:59 am

(8) Comments | [Commenting has been closed](#) | [E-mail the Author](#)

Posted to: [Occupy Wall Street](#)



NEENA SATIJA PHOTO

Facilitators at work Sunday.

A subset of the Occupy New Haven movement may soon have a place to call home outside of the Green: An abandoned clock factory just outside of downtown.



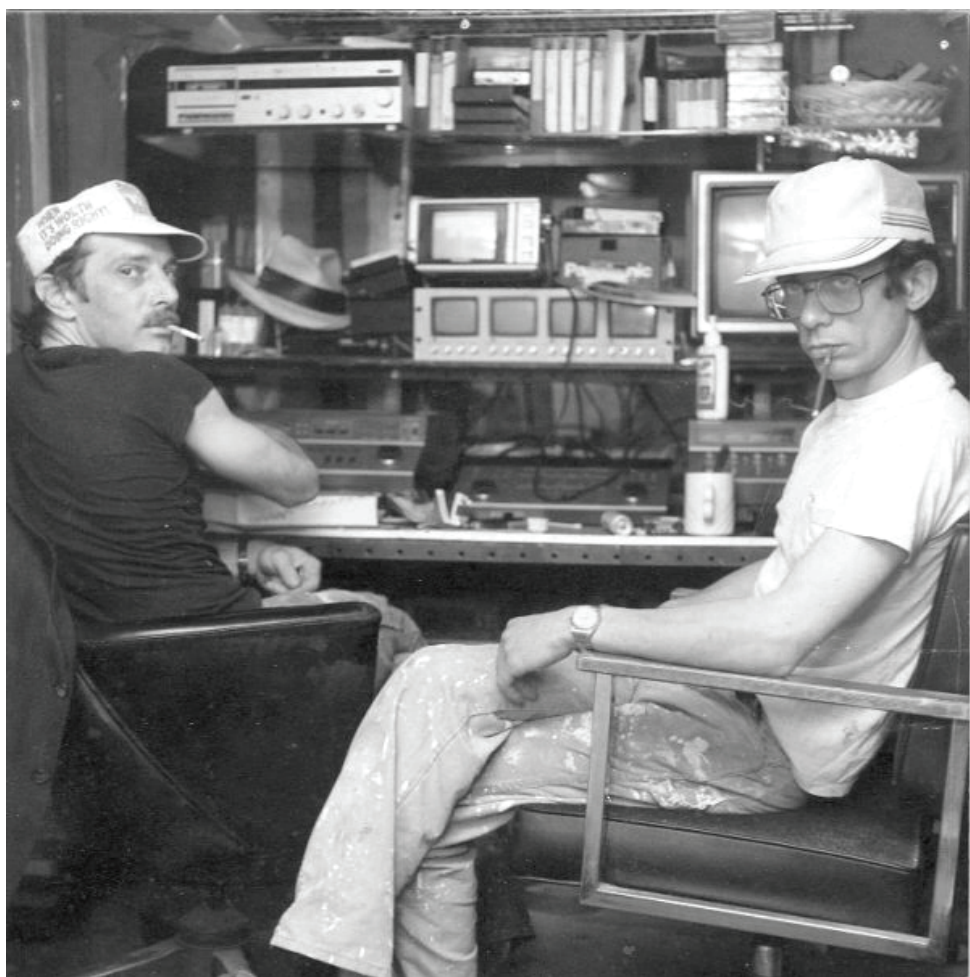
FUZE ASSEMBLY LINE -- 1945



In 1943 our engineers redesigned and tooled a new bomb fuze which was immediately thrown into production in our plant. To date production has been smoothly accomplished and the performance of this item has been excellent.



While living at 133 Hamilton Street, Dimitri “sharpened his sword as a videographer” experimenting with early video art. Not only did he scavenge and re-purpose parts of the building, he often used the post-industrial surroundings as visual material for his work.



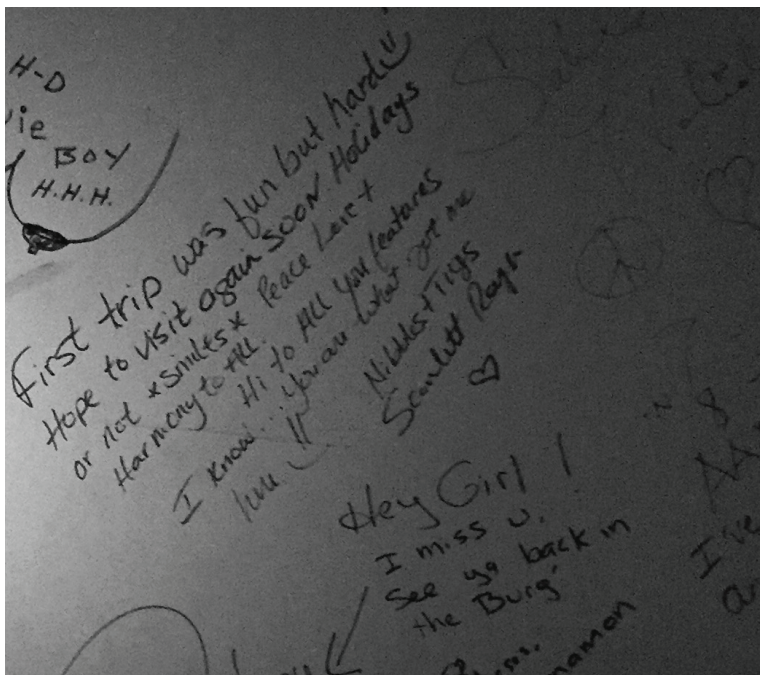


Early maps of New Haven show a contiguous urban fabric. Regular square blocks of interspersed residential and industrial buildings are punctuated by trees and the large civic space of Wooster Square. The insertion of I-91 created a barrier that fragmented the existing neighborhood and led to the loss of over a dozen of the New Haven clock Company's buildings.



In the decades following the Second World War the promotion of automobile culture, suburbanization, and urban renewal brought significant changes to New Haven. This was met with a fast wave of subtraction of old structures and addition of new modernist interventions.






More than 1,500 employees ran the massive factory, making 3 million timepieces a year and putting the name of New Haven on the mantles and into the pockets of countless people. Women especially were able to secure employment here, many of whom lived in the Wooster Square neighborhood. Since 1960, the building has been the site of numerous strip clubs. The dancer's memories are still recorded on the walls of 133 Hamilton St.





**FEATURMANIA**  
2

16 TOP ADULT ENTERTAINERS ON 2 MAIN STAGES  
OVER 70 SHOWS PERFORMED IN 3 DAYS  
THOUGHT THE FIRST ONE WAS GOOD??  
THIS ONE WILL BE BETTER!!!



**SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 2 2004**

SUMMER HAZE  
SELENA STEELE  
BRIDGET MONROE  
SAVANNAH RAE

ELEKTRA  
DAMIEN DAVIDSON  
REBECCA WILD  
LANA DEL AMORE

GUEST HOST XXX STAR CRAIG VALENTINE  
AND MANY MORE!!!

PRESENTED BY  
UNIVERSAL ENTERTAINMENT ◻ STAGEDOOR JOHNNYS ◻ GOLDS GYM ◻ HAZE EXPERIENCE EROTIC TOYZ

SHOWCASE HELD AT STAGEDOOR JOHNNY'S  
85 ST JOHN STREET  
NEW HAVEN, CT



A ten-story brick smokestack crowned the factory complex. Video stills by Dimitri Rimsky.







A possible Armistice Day celebration outside the clock Factory in 1918.



"It used to be a thriving neighborhood. Lots of people used to work at the Clock Factory. They would walk to work every day, they would live in the area and do their shopping there too. Look at the neighborhood now... That's what redevelopment did to us."

-Bill Celentano

Artists represented a sort of lull between two economies, as did the ruins, and perhaps a moment of openness in the meaning and imagination of the city, a pause in the urban busyness to wonder and reflect. Artists in these circumstances often became their communities historians, servants of memory and thus of ruin.

-Rebecca Solnit "The Ruins of Memory"



Dimitri Rimsky in his 133 Hamilton Street loft. According to his friend Orrin Bolton, Dimitry was the center of a collaborative effort. This was in large part made possible by having a large, affordable space in which to experiment and bring people together.





Mayor Richard Lee discusses the Oak Street Connector model as part of New Haven's urban renewal plan.



“That’s when you realize what the connection with urbanization is. It’s beyond just seeing the shell of a building. When you go into those buildings and you look and you see the stairs are worn. That’s hundreds of people—mostly men—up and down those stairs every day. Twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years. A whole life’s work in one factory.”  
-Dimitri Rimsky



Dimitri Rimsky at giving a video walkthrough of his loft at the YSoA on 9 May, 2016.



In the early 1980s the Yale schools of Art and Architecture held annual Beaux Arts Ball. Every year had a theme and the costume judges at 1983's *Sex Ball* party were Vincent Scully and Vincent Price, actor and Yale alumnus. Between 300 to 400 people attended the event, Jody Foster among them.





38 Special - *Back Where You Belong*. Stills from music video shot in the Clock Factory





This pamphlet was produced by Dante Furioso and Luis Salas Porras for a spring 2016 seminar at the Yale School of Architecture led by Elihu Rubin called Ghost Town. Made to coincide with a 11 May 2016 event held at 133 Hamilton Street, the pamphlet is for academic purposes only.