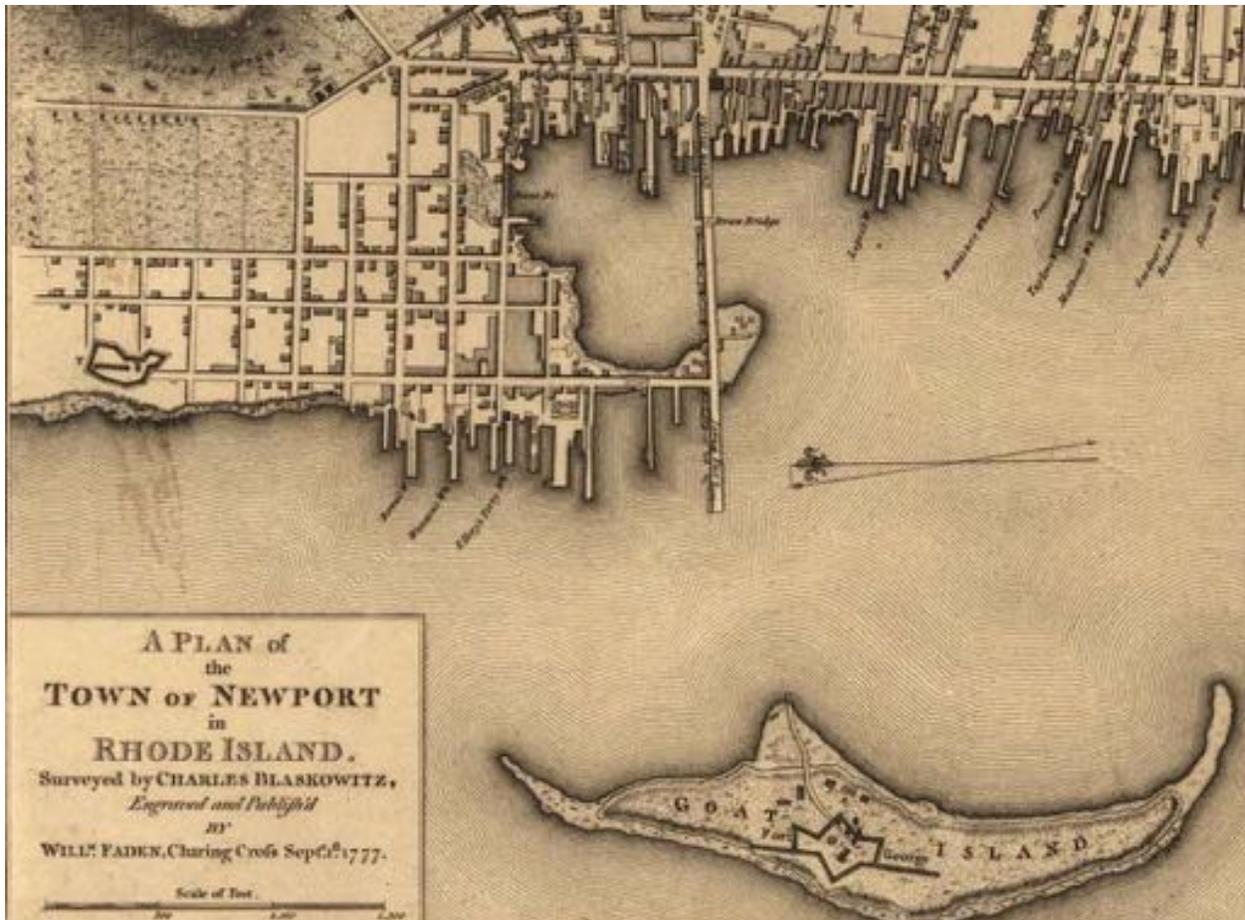


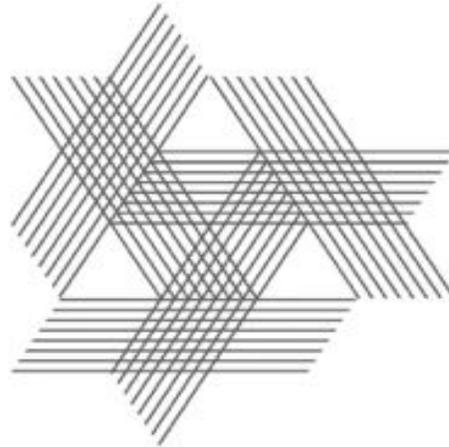
# MAPPING THE NEWPORT EXPERIENCE: A HISTORY OF THE CITY'S URBAN DEVELOPMENT

by  
John R. Tschirch, Architectural Historian



Detail. Charles Blaskowitz. *A Plan of the Town of Newport*, September 1, 1777. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

“Mapping the Newport Experience” is a research project dedicated to documenting the urban history of Newport, Rhode Island from colonial settlement to the present day. Through the use of period maps, paintings, illustrations, photographs and literary descriptions, the project examines the physical layout of the city’s thoroughfares and the cultural response to the urban environment over the past over three and a half centuries.



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Special recognition to Ilse Buchert Nesbitt for permission to reproduce her art work inspired by Newport's streetscapes.

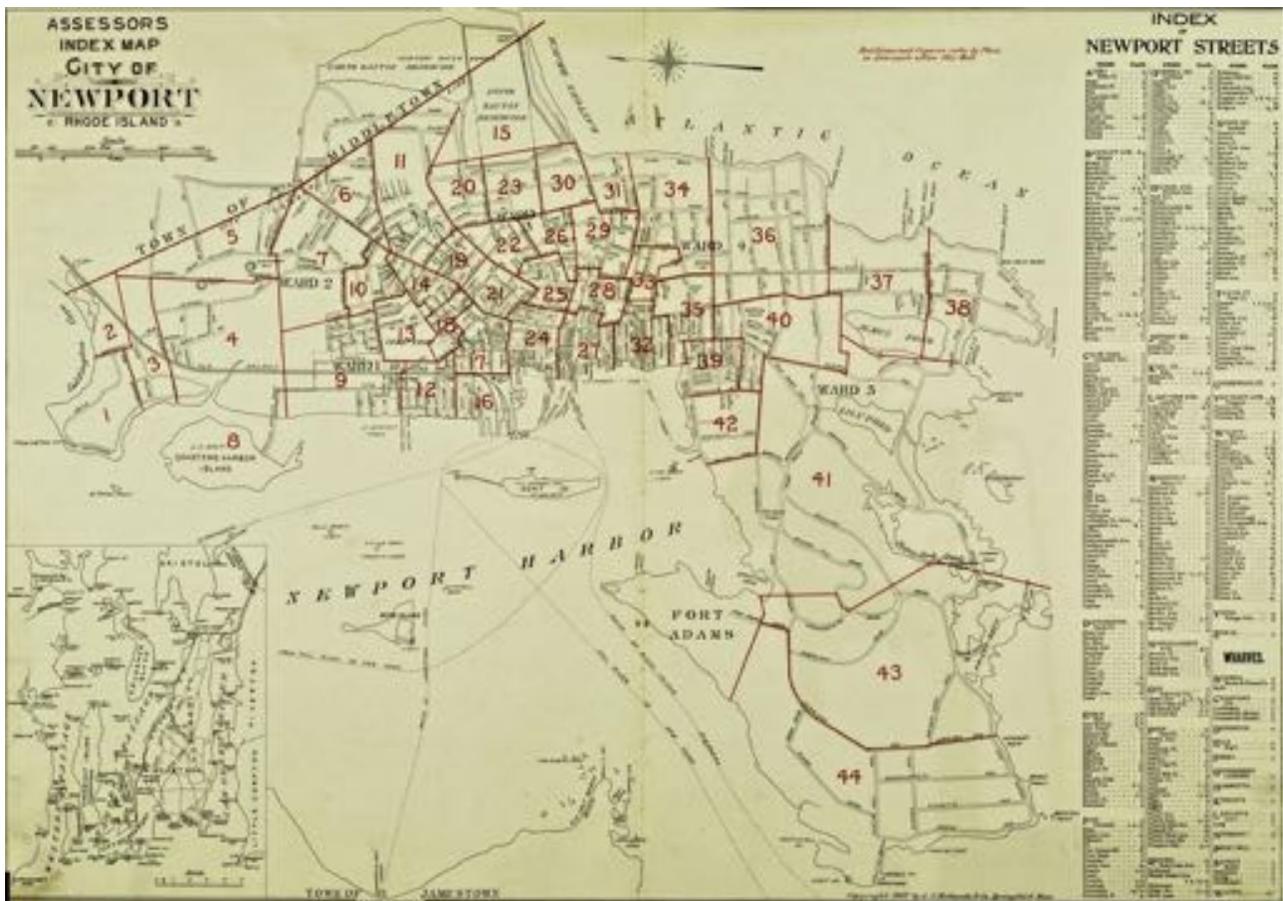
Thank you to Holly Collins for her research expertise and to the corps of featured artists who volunteered many hours photographing Newport's streetscapes in order to enhance and enrich this project.

Featured Artists:

Nick Belong  
Katrina Benner  
Meredith Haskell-Khoury  
Chad Lubertowicz  
Tan-ya Muldoon  
Mark Reimels  
Alex Tavares

## OVERVIEW

How does the urban fabric of Newport reflect the cultural forces that shaped the city? How are artistic, social, political, religious and economic ideas embedded in streets, buildings and open spaces? How have both residents and visitors throughout the ages been affected by and perceived their environment as expressed in their artistic production and visual descriptions of the place? "Mapping the Newport Experience" seeks the answers to these questions as a basis for assessing the city's physical and cultural evolution. The following essay brings together several areas of the humanities in the analysis of the city. Architectural history, urban planning, cultural history and literature all provide a framework for the study of a city renowned for the rarity, authenticity, integrity and national significance of its built heritage and the cultural response it inspires.



J. L. Richards. *City Atlas of Newport, Rhode Island*, 1907. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*Newport is depicted with its urban plan fully developed and intact, from the compact streets of the Colonial era quarter along the harbor to the grid-like thoroughfares of the Victorian neighborhoods (upper part of the map) and the the curving roads of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ocean Drive(lower right side of map). Each sector is a window on to an age illustrating the functional principles and aesthetic values of its builders and inhabitants.*

## INTRODUCTION

Newport, Rhode Island is a place of memory, both collective and individual, where myth and reality intersect in streets and civic spaces. Spectacular scenery, a centuries old architectural heritage and a rich cultural legacy makes for a storied past. From European settlement in the 17<sup>th</sup> century through the present day, the urban layout reflects the influence of the natural forces of topography, fresh water springs and the sea along with the economic, religious, political and social values of its inhabitants. Through the media of maps, paintings, illustrations, photographs and literary descriptions, Newport's evolution may be traced from the entrepreneurship and religious circumstances determining its colonial streetscapes to the picturesque ideals that formed the 19<sup>th</sup> century resort area and the tenets of urban renewal and historic preservation that shaped the 20<sup>th</sup> century city. Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Newport is a remarkably intact city. Its streetscapes may be read like lessons from the past, instructions for the present and revelations for the future. Culture lives in its urban spaces, voices are embedded in its buildings and thoroughfares.

Throughout history, the distinct character of cities and their cultural identity have been inextricably linked. Through literature and the arts, a metropolis is often elevated to mythic status reflecting both the realities and aspirations of a cultural epoch. The urban historian, Wolfgang Braunfels, wrote,

“History tries to encompass overlapping processes. It has to take every aspect of life into consideration. Cities can be understood neither from their beginnings alone nor from their final state...Old views of a town complete our knowledge by making circumstances visible to us. What is handed down to us visually teaches us with greater precision about the genesis of buildings, their aesthetic, ideological and semantic rank...We are received by the past whenever we set foot in an old city square, and at the same time we are taught about a past that never denies its ideals in the face of the present.”<sup>1</sup>

Newport's cityscape reads like a history book of urban design in America. The colonial quarter's system of wharves are evidence of the commercial impetus that formed the city, while the grid established by the Society of Friends in the Point is an example of rational planning dating back to ancient times. No single house of worship dominates the streets. Instead, they are scattered throughout the town, reflecting the principle of freedom of conscience that prevailed in the colonial community. In succeeding centuries, the formality of Bellevue Avenue, the picturesque plan of Ocean Drive and the modernist urban planning features of America's Cup Avenue each reveal the aesthetic, social and economic forces that shaped the city.

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<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Braunfels, *Urban Design in Western Europe*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 9.

The documents record both the physical growth of Newport and the role of its history and legendary beauty as key features of its mystique, an intangible quality that has been as potent an influence over time as the built environment. For how does a storied city become so? How does a mythic place arise? It begins with the land, the sea, the ways in which humankind makes its mark on the topography and the legends that emerge by those who celebrate the place as time goes by. The physical and the metaphysical combine to make the mythic image.

Upon visiting Newport in 1906, after decades of living abroad, Henry James bore witness to both a Newport and a country at large that had dramatically changed. Casting a discerning eye about the city, he responded to both the physical place and the more mutable atmosphere that had always captured his senses as he wrote, "Newport, on my finding myself back there, threatened me sharply, quite at first, with that predicament at which I have glanced in another connection or two- the felt condition of having known it too well and loved it too much for description or definition."<sup>2</sup>

Although he declared his struggle to describe and define Newport, James did so with nuance and depth as so many artists, before and since, who have encountered the city. These individuals invariably celebrated and critiqued what can be called an "accidental work of urban art," for Newport was never subject to a methodical plan with a grand vision. The city is the sum total of centuries of evolution, resulting in a work of art and eliciting many of the responses associated with a work of art: admiration; condemnation; interpretation; and, not least of all, inspiration.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry James, "The Sense of Newport," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, August 1906, p. 344.

## THE LAND

The interplay of land and sea define Newport. Situated at the southern tip of Aquidneck Island, the city is set in a varied topography of marshy lowlands, hills, valleys and cliffs bordered by water on three sides. This veritable arcadia of scenic views is composed of a sheltered west facing harbor with coves, wetland and stony outcroppings. To the south are the rocky promontories and ponds of the Ocean Drive area. The high cliffs and flat landscape of Bellevue Avenue dominate the eastern side of the city while gently sloping hills to the north terminate at Easton's Pond, to the east, and at the shores of Narragansett Bay, to the west.

When Giovanni da Verrazzano first laid eyes upon Aquidneck Island in 1524, he encountered a place already marked by human settlement. This Italian sea captain in the service of the French Crown had been exploring the eastern coastline of North America and recorded his account in a letter to his Majesty, King Francis I.

“We reached a land...where we found an excellent harbor...We frequently went five to six leagues into the interior, and found it as pleasant as I can possibly describe, and suitable for every kind of cultivation – grain, wine or oil. For these fields extend for XXV to XXX leagues, they are open and free of any obstacles or trees, and so fertile that any kind of seed would produce excellent crops...When we went farther inland, we saw their houses, which are circular in shape, about XIII to XV paces across, made of bent saplings, they are arranged without any architectural pattern...They move these houses from one place to another according to the richness of the site and the season.”<sup>3</sup>

This was no virgin wilderness, but a highly cultivated landscape created by generations of Native Americans. Giovanni da Verrazano did not remain in the locale he called “Port di Refugio,” but continued on with his exploration of the coastline north to Nova Scotia.<sup>4</sup> The remarks he made on this island would be repeated by countless observers commenting on the abundance, allure and enchanting seaside atmosphere of what appeared to be paradise. Another century passed before European colonists settled in Newport. A place of remarkable fertility and natural beauty, the stage was set for the creation of the city that eventually rose on the blessed spot.

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<sup>3</sup> Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Voyages of Giovanni da Verrazzano, 1524-1528*, (Yale, 1970), pp. 133-134.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 140.

## SETTLEMENT: THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Idealism and pragmatism combined to create Newport when, in 1639, a group of colonists settled at the southern tip of Aquidneck Island. Among the leaders of the group were Nicholas Easton, William Coddington, William Brenton, John Clarke, John Coggeshall, Jeremy Clarke, Thomas Hazard, Henry Bull and William Dyer.<sup>5</sup> These founders provided the place names for various points of land, coves and streets in the new settlement, which occupied lands already cleared and cultivated for centuries by Native Americans. Following the principles established by Roger Williams with the founding of the Rhode Island Colony, freedom of conscience prevailed in the minds and civic affairs of the settlers while water sources and topography determined the placement of the streets and domiciles. The lack of one dominant religious sect in the life of the community, as in nearby Puritan Massachusetts Bay Colony, produced no house of worship as the focal point of the town, not even when the inhabitants established the "Great Common."<sup>6</sup>

In March of 1640, the Rhode Island General Assembly ordered the founders to "lay out the streets and lands and to keep all sea banks free for fishing for the town of Newport."<sup>7</sup> The first settlers built their houses near a spring at the present day intersection of Spring and Touro Streets. Several streams emanated from the spring in the direction of Broad Street, now known as Broadway, and Marlborough Street towards the harbor. In 1654, William Dyre wrote of "High Wayes Layd out by mr. Nicholas Easton, mr. John Clarke and my selfe," which extended from the spring to the seaside and southward along a grid created by the parallel placement of Thames and Spring Streets.<sup>8</sup> Broad Street was oriented in a northeasterly direction toward meadows and orchards. Farming and fishing provided sustenance for the first few years of settlement until the colonists turned to sea trade. Wharves and the streets connecting to them became the dominant feature of the urban plan. Tanneries rose along the waterway adjacent to Tanner Street, now Dr. Marcus Wheatland Boulevard, while sawmills, breweries, ropewalks and other shops supporting shipbuilding and maritime activities lined the burgeoning arteries of a town numbering over four hundred houses by 1680.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Records of the Colony of Island of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, Vol. 1638-1644*, Rhode Island State Archives. Providence, RI. Newport's founders had broken away from the settlement established by Anne Hutchinson in 1636 on the northern tip of Aquidneck Island.

<sup>6</sup> Antoinette Downing and Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev., (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1967), p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, 1636-1663*, p. 102. Rhode Island State Archives

<sup>8</sup> *Rhode Island Land Evidences Vol. 1., 1648-1696*, p. 54.

<sup>9</sup> Downing. p. 17.

The triumph of mercantilism became apparent in the 1680s when several merchants collaborated in the creation of the Proprietors of Long Wharf to promote the shipping trade.<sup>10</sup> Due to the value of waterfront land, narrow lots ran from the harbor on the west up the hillside to the east. The north/south axis of Thames street extended the entire length of the harbor and every side street terminated at the waterfront. Thus, the sea determined the city's orientation. Shops and residences increased in number, but there were very few religious structures as reported in 1690 in *A Short Account of the Present State of New England*, which reported, "here is a medley of most Perswasians butt neither church nor meeting house, except for one built for the use of Quakers, who are very numerous."<sup>11</sup> The freedom to pursue business preoccupied the residents as Newport grew into one of the major seaports of British North America. Sturdily built wharves, houses and warehouses defined the streetscapes of the hard working and entrepreneurial colonial city. Yet, it lacked grandeur. With the increasing mercantile wealth of the ensuing century, all of that would change.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

## CIVIC SPLENDOR: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY



Unknown Artist. *Newport in 1740*. Courtesy of Mrs. Alletta M. Cooper. *Wharves and steeples define the skyline of the colonial city. Fort George appears on Goat Island in the foreground. Streets and buildings were oriented towards the waterfront.*

In 1712, the Newport's governing council declared, "the town had grown to the admiration of all and was Metropolitan" and, with confidence, commissioned John Mumford to survey the streets of their fair city.<sup>12</sup> These very thoroughfares became the setting for grand architecture as the 18th century progressed. Unlike Williamsburg, Philadelphia or Savannah, which from inception were formally planned cities focused on squares, parks and public edifices, Newport's streets were well established by the time construction commenced on large scale architectural projects.<sup>13</sup> Churches, meeting houses and civic buildings had to take their place among the domiciles of merchants, artisans and laborers. Even within such limitations, the effect was exceptional and created a striking display of public grandeur.

Facing the Great Common, the Friends Meeting House (1699) was Newport's first large building. Its post and beam construction and shingled facades, in keeping with the Quaker principle of plain living, provided no elaborate ornament. The Sabbatarian Meeting House

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p. 18. Town Meeting Records, (Newport Historical Society), I, 138.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 21. The Town Council had instituted an act concerning the paving of streets in 1707.

(1706) soon followed in yet another understated manner. Architectural richness arrived with Trinity Church (1726), designed by Richard Munday, who gave the cityscape its first tall spire modeled, as with the body of the church itself, after the London churches of Sir Christopher Wren. Set on a narrow plot bordered by Spring, Church and Frank Streets, Trinity Church had little ornament on its lower floors since neighboring houses clustered around the sacred edifice. No large scale public square or green provided space to view the building. The spire, soaring high above all other buildings, became a constant landmark offering a sophisticated rendering of classical arches, obelisks, arches and urns to the skyline.



Detail. *Newport in 1740*. Courtesy of Mrs. Alletta M. Cooper.  
*Richard Munday's grand buildings dominate the skyline. The spire of Trinity Church, to the left, and the cupola of the Colony House, in the center, proclaimed the wealth and culture of the prosperous maritime port. The Friends Meeting House is to the left of the Colony House.*

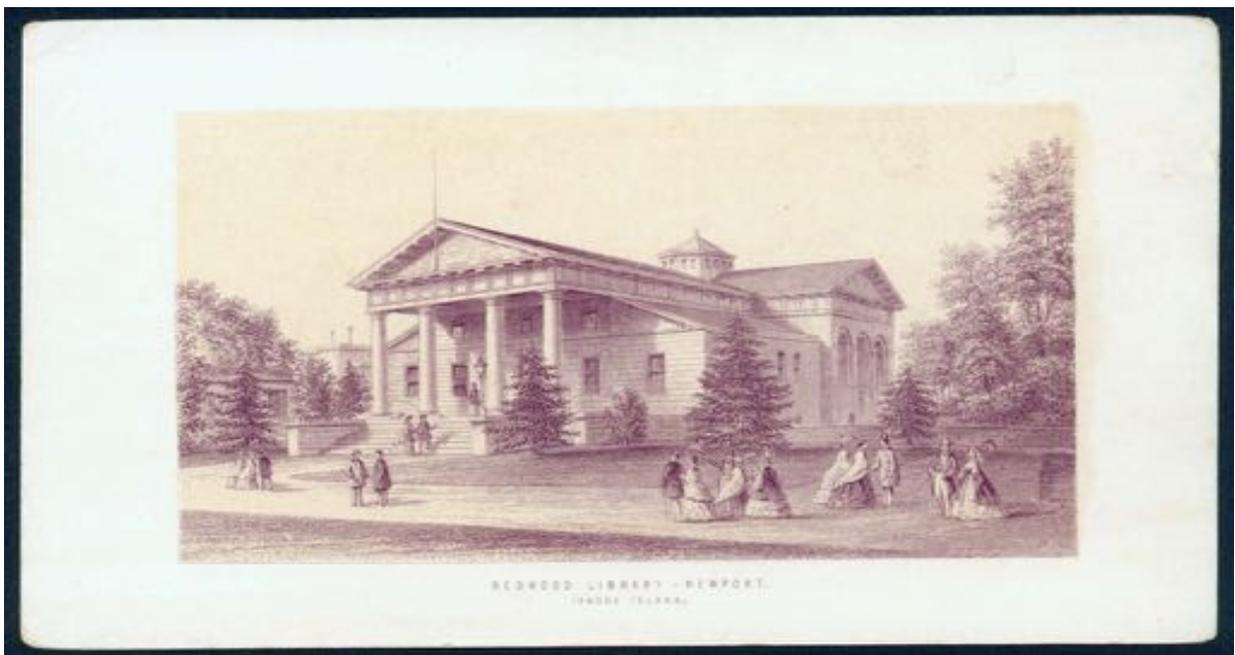
Richard Munday's architecture introduced the sumptuous Baroque to the urban landscape of Newport. After the successful completion of Trinity Church, his most important project lay ahead with the Colony House (1739-41). Placed between the town spring and the sprawling triangular shaped area known as the "Parade," the Colony House became the focal point of a large public space. Its main elevation faced west affording a view to the end of Long Wharf. Individuals disembarking from ships on the wharf beheld an extensive vista towards the opulent brick and brownstone building with a gilded pineapple atop its elaborately carved central pediment. Thus, the first grand urban axis in Newport did not focus on a religious building, but a government house approached from a commercial dock. Created after the establishment of its surrounding streets, Munday's building took advantage of its physical situation to bold effect. The final ensemble of the Colony House, the Parade and Long Wharf heralded a new scale of civic splendor, a reflection of the economic wealth and taste for architectural landmarks that characterized the 18th century city.



John Collins. *State House*. Print, 1850. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.  
*View of Colony House from the Parade, known after the Revolution as "Washington Square."*

While the Colony House visually dominated the center of Newport, a building rose to the east in the meadowlands above the city that would herald a new era in architectural magnificence. Because no land or urban square existed for the sole purpose of serving as a setting for a public building, those who wished to embellish the town with fine architecture had to make their home wherever opportunity provided acreage. This was the case with the Redwood Library, which began with a group of intellectually minded merchants, ministers and scholars who were given a plot of land on the outskirts of the town. In 1729, a group of prominent residents formed the Philosophical Society for "the propagation of knowledge and virtue through a free

conversation.”<sup>14</sup> Their lively discussions and common interests led to the desire for a library to house their combined collection of books. In 1747, the group, renamed the Company of the Redwood Library, engaged Peter Harrison to design a building worthy of their classical tastes. He created the first Neo-Palladian temple form in British North America. Such a noble edifice would usually be the focal point of an avenue, square or prominent hill. Not so in Newport. A gift by Henry Collins determined the location of the temple to learning. One of Newport’s richest merchants and generous patrons, Collins was known as the “Lorenzo de Medici” of colonial Rhode Island. He donated his bowling green on the crest of the hill above the town for the purpose of building the library. Thus, the structure stood in isolation among fields, the result of a practical gift rather than intentional placement in a magnificent spot. Although not initially perceived as Newport’s version of the Parthenon on an Acropolis, the result, however, was still august. Harrison established his career and went on to endow Newport’s streetscapes with some of the finest public buildings in the Neo-Palladian manner, such as Touro Synagogue (1762) and the Brick Market (1763). He would ably adapt his designs to the various lots made available to him in a town guided first by the needs of commerce and, second, the taste for public grandeur.



Unknown Artist. *Redwood Library and Athenaeum*, 1860. Courtesy of Redwood Library and Athenaeum

*The Doric style temple front of the library conferred a noble classicism on the cityscape of Newport. Throughout the centuries, the building has acquired a venerable mystique, perceived by many as a landmark of a heroic age. Among its members have been the poets Emma Lazarus and Julia Ward Howe, the writers Henry James and Edith Wharton, and the painter Charles Byrd King.*

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<sup>14</sup> George Champlin Mason, *Annals of the Redwood Library*, (Newport: The Redwood Library and Athenaeum, 1890), pp, 12-13.

While entrepreneurship influenced the plan of Newport, there is a striking example of religious ideals producing a unique district. In 1674, Nicholas Easton granted land on Easton's Point to the Society of Friends.<sup>15</sup> In 1715, the Quakers directed their members to investigate the layout of Philadelphia by their fellow Friends.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the economic impetus underlying the planning of Thames Street and the wharves, the organization of the Point, while conscious of commercial activities, exhibits the spiritual and cultural ideals of the Quakers. Organized in a symmetrical grid pattern with lots of equal size and streets named by number and after trees, the district exhibits an emphasis on order, equality and modesty. The layout also derives from the classical principles of European town planning developed during the Renaissance. The urban grid plan type was first developed in ancient times by Hellenistic planners in cities such as Miletus and Priene.<sup>17</sup> Romans then adapted the grid to both military camps and newly founded cities throughout their empire. As Renaissance scholars and artists rediscovered the ancient world, the grid pattern became the basis for ideal city planning. With its emphasis on function and its appeal to reason, this urban plan type crossed the Atlantic and found a home in British North America. The Quakers of Newport may have valued the grid more for its practicality and simplicity rather than its classical allusions, but it also represented the most advanced approach to city planning of its day.

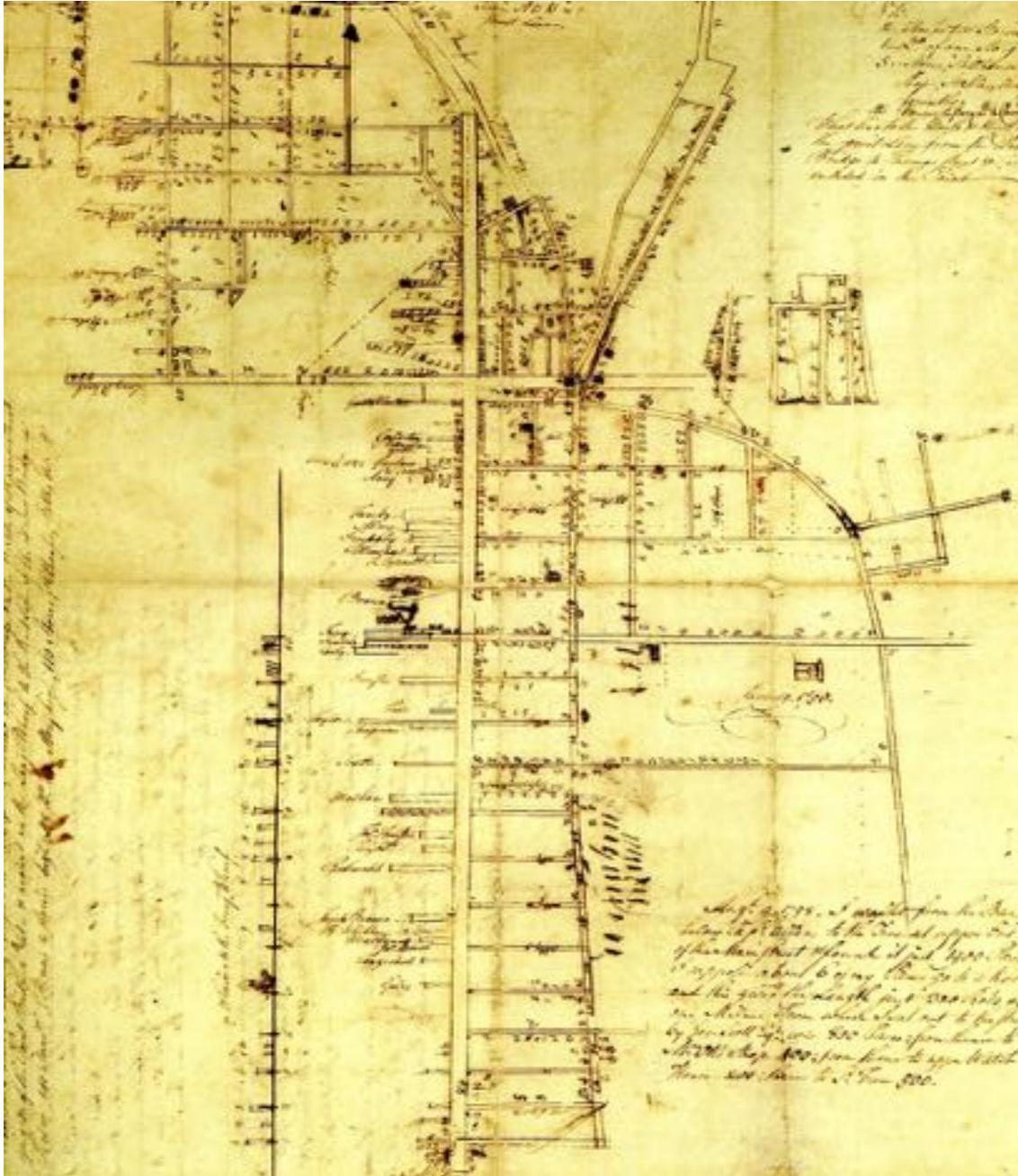
The sense of pride in Newport's cityscape is evident in the map drawn in 1758 by the Reverend Ezra Stiles, who gave as much attention to public buildings and shops as to the orientation of streets. This eminent theologian and scholar served as the Pastor of the Second Congregational Church, Librarian of Redwood Library, and, later President of Yale University. His approach to the map was not that of a skilled cartographer but as man of the Enlightenment, as one dedicated to recording his environment. Each wharf is named, reflecting its primary importance as an economic engine. Religious structures and the Colony House are clearly listed along with every type of shop and house. The Parade, present day Washington Square, appears as a triangle dominated to the east by Long Wharf and to the west by the Colony House. To the south, the Rev. Stiles recorded the two long streets, Thames and Spring, and the grid created by the cross streets leading directly to the wharves. To the northwest of Washington Square is the planned grid of the Point and in the northeasterly direction is Broad Street, including listings of its numerous domiciles and shops.

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<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Easton, *Last Will and Testament*, 1674. Newport Historical Society, Vault A Box 82, Folder 6. Ann Bull Easton, the widow of Nicholas Easton, deeded additional acreage on the Point to the Society of Friends in 1706. Ann Bull (Easton) Deed, Land Evidence, the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, October 15, 1706, pp. 360-362. Newport Historical Society, Vault A Box 82, Folder 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Society of Friends Records of Rhode Island Monthly Meetings, 1707-1739*, February 26, 1715, p. 115, and March 31, 1715, p. 116. Newport Historical Society.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis Mumford. *The City in History*. (New York: Harcourt Inc., 1961), pp. 192-193.



The Rev. Ezra Stiles. *Map of Newport, 1758*. Courtesy of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum. Religious buildings, shops and the number of houses, indicating the number of stories, are listed in detail. Long Wharf, the most prominent in Newport, appears in the upper left side of the map. The significance of commercial maritime activity is evident in the naming of the wharves, the only features of the city to be identified in such a manner.

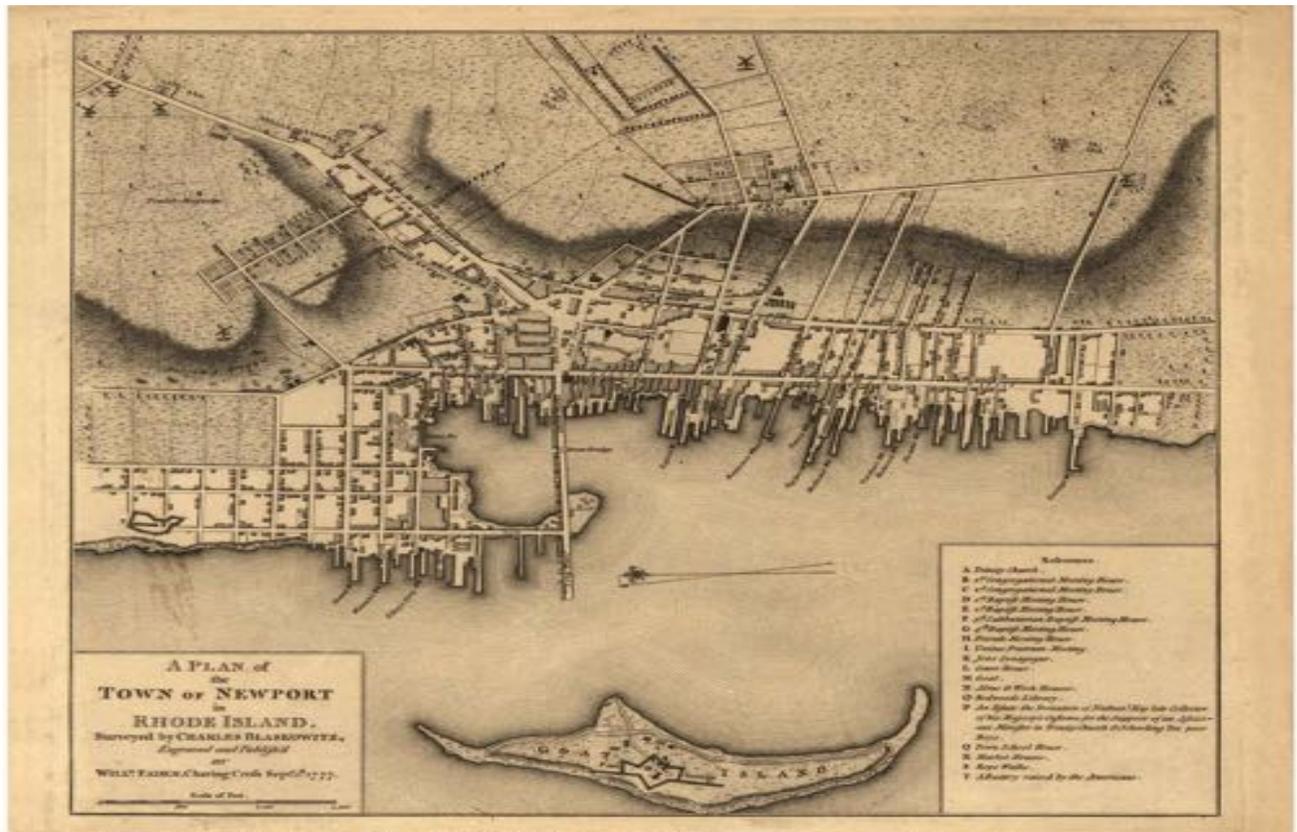
The final grand gesture of Newport's 18<sup>th</sup> century commercial and cultural splendor occurred in the late 1760s. Although not intentionally envisioned as a focal point, the Parade, out of necessity, evolved into the city's visual center. Long Wharf and the location of the triangular grassy plot for local militia produced the shape of the area. The placement of the Colony House at the head of this open zone in 1741 established a formal axis. In 1758, Peter Harrison provided the final touch to the fine square with his design for the Brick Market. The location for this building was entrepreneurial rather than aesthetic. Within easy reach of Long Wharf and the Thames street commercial quarter, it was perfectly situated as an economic nexus. Harrison designed a sophisticated version of a Palladian town palace with an arcaded first level topped by monumental two story half columns in the Ionic style. With merchants' houses lining the streets around the square, the Colony House at its eastern end and the Brick Market at its eastern end, the Parade became an urban space of civic splendor. Fine steeples of the various houses of worship may have marked Newport's general skyline, but a government building and a market house dominated its main square. Politics and commerce, rather than religion, ruled in Colonial Newport's urban scenery. Thus, the city's streets and buildings are the physical manifestation of the Rhode Island colony's dedication to political liberty, freedom of conscience and the realities of maritime trade.



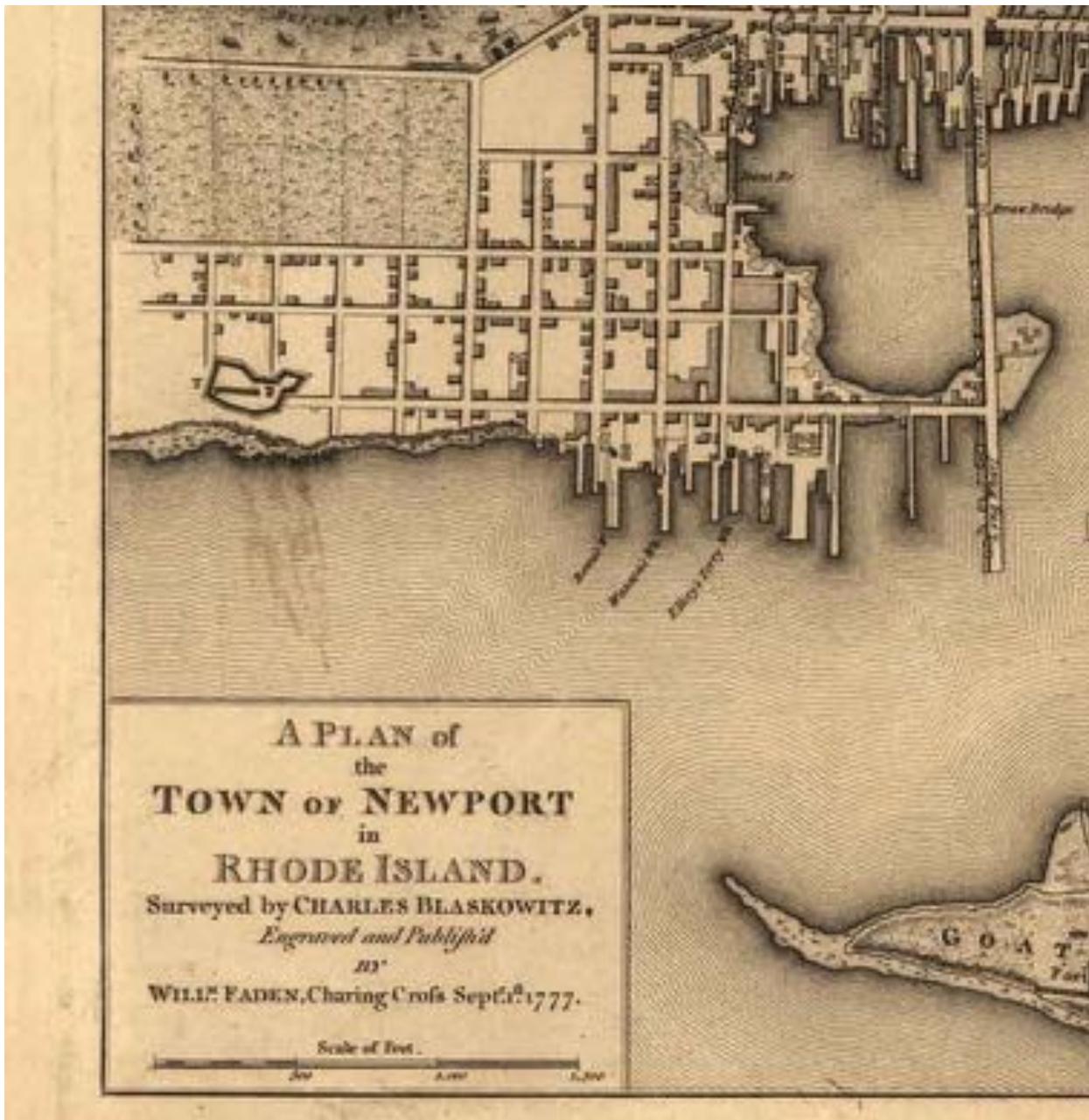
Unidentified Hessian Artist. *The Parade*, 1818. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*The Parade, the triangular green lawn, is to the left. Peter Harrison's Brick Market building (1762) is the focal point of the eastern end of the square. To the right of the Brick Market is Long Wharf. The Parade was renamed Washington Square following the Revolution.*

Newport's economy and the flourishing of its arts and crafts reached its apex in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Charles Blaskowitz recorded the urban plan of this vibrant city at its height in 1777, the very year when it faced the abyss with occupation by British troops at the beginning of the War for Independence. His map lists all public buildings, ropewalks, a battery raised by the Americans, and windmills on the hills above town. Side streets extending from Spring to Jew Street, the present day Bellevue Avenue, indicate the expansion of the city since the 1758 Ezra Stiles map. Such growth, however, came to a halt with the war.



Charles Blaskowitz. *A Plan of the Town of Newport, 1777*. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. *The Blaskowitz map depicts the clear grid plan of the Point (on the lower left), Long Wharf cutting across the cove and terminating, on land, in the triangular shaped Parade, which would become Washington Square, and the long thoroughfare of Thames Street running the length of the waterfront. Wharves feature prominently, terminating in the grid of streets extending eastward up the hill to Spring Street and Jew Street. Each public and religious building is clearly delineated on the plan and listed in the the lower right corner of the map. Executed at the high point of Newport's urban development n the eve of the Revolution, the map captures the city at a critical juncture in its history. Economic downturn after the Revolution limited development until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the field and meadows adjacent to the town became subdivided for summer houses as Newport rose to prominence as a seaside resort.*

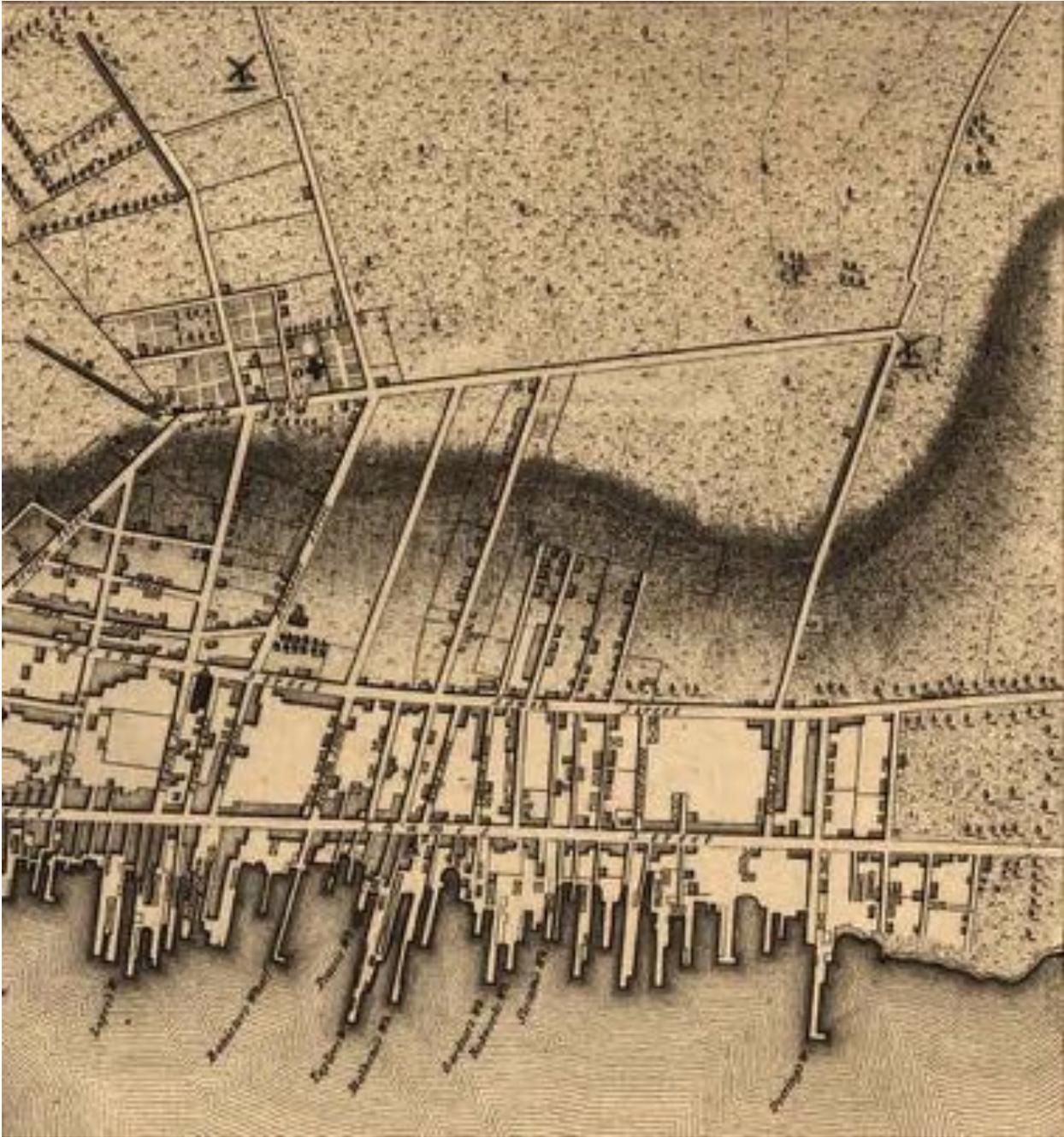


Detail. Blaskowitz. *Plan of Newport*, 1777. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

*This detail depicts the Point section developed by the Society of Friends in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century on land donated by Nicholas Easton. The land was divided into square and rectangular lots in a grid arrangement typical of 18<sup>th</sup> century city planning. Houses line the streets while the center of the lots provided garden space. During the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the lots were subdivided to allow for additional buildings, increasing the architectural density of the district. The cove, to the right, was filled in beginning in the 1860s to provide waterfront access for the Old Colony Railroad.*



Detail. Blaskowitz. *Plan of Newport, 1777*. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.  
*This detail shows Broad Street, later renamed Broadway, the central artery leading from the heart of the city to open countryside. The topography of hills determined its placement as the most convenient route out of Newport. Fresh water sources along Tanner Street also determined the layout of the street and the location of its many tanneries. Queen and Ann Streets form the triangular shape of the Parade.*

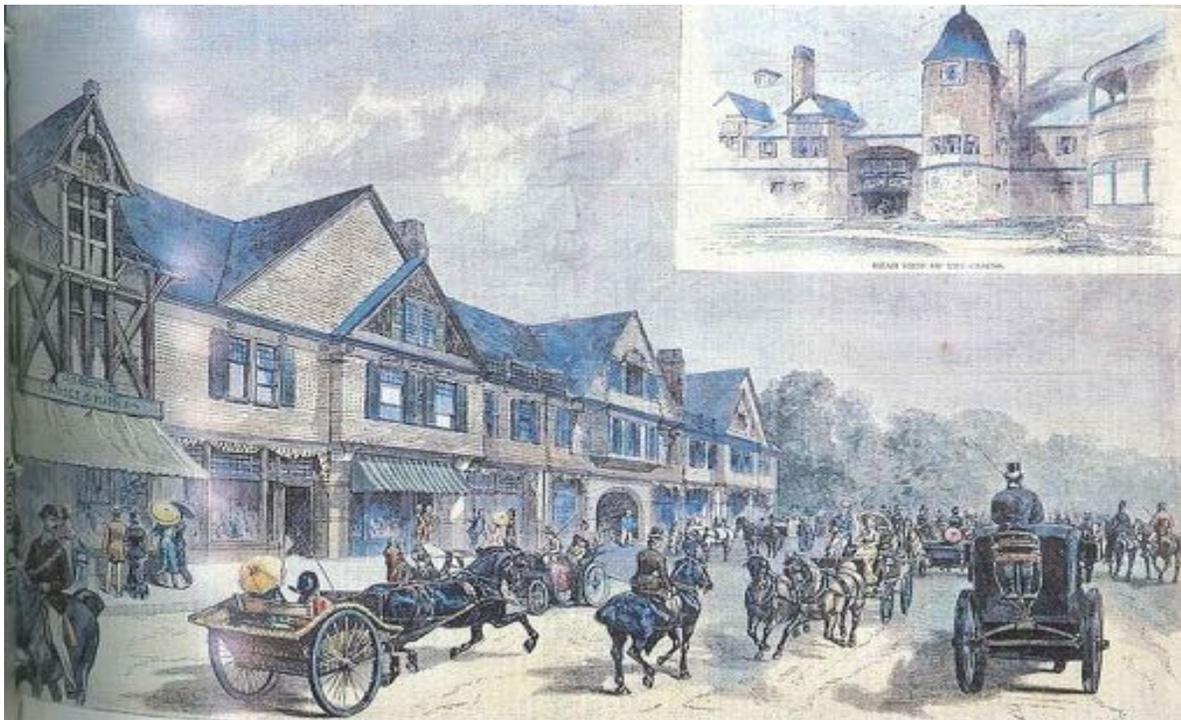


Detail. Blaskowitz. *Plan of Newport, 1777*. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.  
*Lower Thames Street served as the main north/south oriented traffic artery accessing the waterfront and its many wharves. Each side street terminates in a wharf and, in the eastern direction, climbs a gentle hill to Spring and South Streets.*

Newport's system of streets and wharves were fully established by the eve of the Revolution. Public buildings proclaimed the wealth and increasing cultural sophistication of the inhabitants. This fine metropolis enjoyed the height of commercial and artistic success, which came to a drastic end with the onset of war. Occupation by the British from 1777 to 1780 and the ensuing loss of population substantially impaired the town's maritime economy and associated enterprises. The waterfront, the Parade, the Point and the Hill remained the nucleus of a city that was now surpassed economically by Providence and other ports in the post-war years. Few new streets and even fewer grand buildings appeared on the urban landscape, a symptom of economic stagnation. Only in the 1840s did Newport begin to flourish again with its rise as a summer resort. While the colonial seaport diminished in social and economic importance, the open meadows to its east and south provided fertile ground for the next boom in urban development.

## VICTORIAN EXPANSION: 1840-1890

Land subdivision, the establishment of Bellevue Avenue and Ocean Drive, real estate speculation, resort architecture and the introduction of trains and streetcars characterized Newport's growth in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. As the acknowledged "Queen of Resorts," the city experienced a cottage boom as summer houses rose on the once open meadows to the east and south of the old colonial quarter.<sup>18</sup> This era valued the picturesque, celebrating the type of spectacular natural landscape which Newport possessed in abundance. Fashionable society brought its own codes of conduct and behavior to this pastoral setting, which evolved into a very public stage where the need to see and be seen dictated social habits, as so aptly stated in Henry James' recollections of Bellevue Avenue. "Hadn't it been above all, in good faith, the Age of Beauties- the blessed age when it was so easy to *be* a Beauty on the Avenue."<sup>19</sup> Architects made their reputations with commissions for summer villas. Painters, illustrators and photographers captured the sublime atmosphere of the seaside climate and writers and poets reflected on the place and the social manners and mores of its occupants. In this romantic age, the myth of Newport emerged in the hands of these artists inspired by its now two centuries old past, enchanted by its scenery and fascinated by its architectural achievements.



C. Graham. *The Newport Casino*. Lithograph, 1883. *Harper's Weekly Magazine*.  
*The daily drive on Bellevue Avenue became a primary ritual of Newport's fashionable summer colony in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

<sup>18</sup> *City Atlas of Newport, R.I.* 1876, G.M. Hopkins, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>19</sup> James, p. 352.

A dirt road, known as Jew Street, leading south from the old town became the focal point for urban expansion in the 1840s as summer cottages, such as Kingscote (1841) and the Edward King Villa (1845), were built among open pastureland with views to the distant harbor and ocean. Speculators, notably Alfred Smith and Joseph Bailey, were assisted by George Champlin Mason, Sr., a painter, architect and editor of the *Newport Mercury* who used the newspaper to promote Newport as a resort.<sup>20</sup> Central to this idea was the creation of a proper roadway providing access to the the cliffs and ocean. Jew Street was extended and, when completed in 1853, given the official title of “Bellevue Avenue,” or beautiful view, a French name in keeping with the desire to appeal to fashionable summer visitors.<sup>21</sup> This long straight thoroughfare opened up the entire eastern side of Newport to development. Farms were purchased and subdivided. Street plans in this district were symmetrical and orderly since the flat topography lent itself to a grid plan.<sup>22</sup>



Unknown Artist. *Bellevue Avenue*. Photograph, circa 1880. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*Gates, fences and the greenery of fashionable summer cottages defined the character of the Bellevue Avenue district, which reflects the importance placed on introducing nature into mid-19<sup>th</sup> century streetscapes.*

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<sup>20</sup> W. Mackenzie Woodward, “Ocean Drive National Historic Landmark Study”, (Rhode Island Historical and Preservation Commission, October 2008), Section 8, p. 5. In the mid-1840s, Alfred E. Smith developed three hundred acres of land in the Kay-Catherine-Old Beach Road area.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Section 8, p. 5.

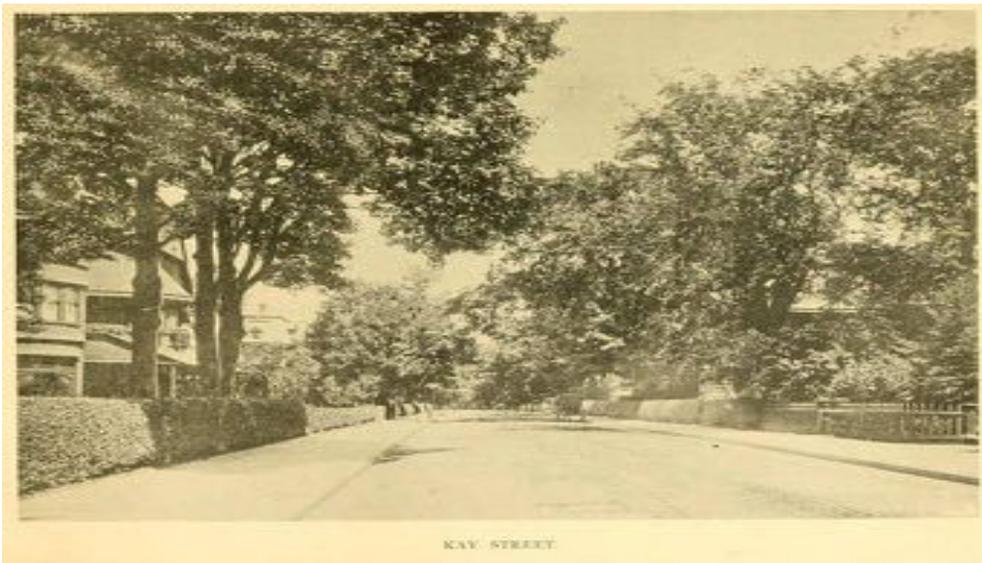
<sup>22</sup> The evolution of the city in the period 1840 to 1890 is documented in the following atlases: *City Atlas of Newport, RI*, 1876, G.M. Hopkins, Philadelphia, PA; *Newport, RI*, 1878, Galt and Hoy, New York, N.Y; *City Atlas of Newport, RI*, 1883, G.M. Hopkins, Philadelphia, PA.; *Newport, RI*, 1884, Sanborn Map and Publishing Co.

The building boom in this neatly laid out area ensued at a quick pace in the 1850s. Artists, such as John P. Newell, recorded this architectural activity in illustrations made for sale. The world watched and critiqued every major new house, as seen by the commentary of the noted poet, William Cullen Bryant.

“Cottages- everything here is called a cottage- every variety of architecture. Swiss, Gothic, French, Elizabethan, and American, and of every degree of cost, from the humbler structure that is rented for a thousand a year up to the stately mansion in which hundreds of thousands are invested, line the spacious avenues...”<sup>23</sup>

These early summer houses were set in open lawns, but, by the 1870s, the taste for lush specimen trees altered the appearance of the district. Influenced by the prevailing taste for the picturesque, nature made its way into the streetscape. The prominent architectural critic and landscape writer Marianna Griswold van Rensselaer bore witness to the emerging interest in urban trees in the May 1886 issue of *The Century Magazine*,

“But to the student of domestic architecture, Newport is the most interesting of our summer colonies. Its newer portions show a characteristic instance of that way of village planning which I have already spoken of as peculiarly American- wide streets of detached houses, each with its own small lawn and garden, and all overshadowed by thickset and lofty trees.”<sup>24</sup>



Unknown Artist. *Kay Street*. Photograph, circa 1885. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

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<sup>23</sup> William Cullen Bryant, ed. “Newport,” *Picturesque America*, 1872.

<sup>24</sup> Marianna Griswold van Rensselaer, “American Country Dwellings,” *The Century Magazine*, May 1886.

Although gaining fame for its houses, Bellevue Avenue was first and foremost, a street of gates, fences and greenery. The prominence of nature in the cityscape resulted from the fascination for the picturesque as popularized by the theorist and author, Andrew Jackson Downing, who advocated for a harmony between buildings and landscape. His best selling book, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850), featured an image of the Edward King Villa (1845) set in a luxuriant landscape between Bellevue Avenue and Spring Street.<sup>25</sup> The house surrounded by trees and gardens would become a pattern of development for American communities throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the decades progressed, Newport's estates created an urban forest that gave the entire resort area on the eastern side of the city the atmosphere of one continuous parkland. This impetus to treat Newport as one entire landscape is evident in the writing of Ernest Bowditch, who designed the grounds of The Breakers, Vinland and Wakehurst in the 1870s and early 1880s. He envisioned these adjacent estates, linked to each other by a network of serpentine paths and offering expansive views across each open lawns, "to act as foils for each other... to produce one harmonious visual whole."<sup>26</sup>



Clarence Stanhope. *Mrs. J.M. Fiske's Villa "Masonlea" on Ruggles Avenue*. Photograph, circa 1890. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*The low stone wall and hedge allows for an extensive view across the estate grounds to the sea. This type of openness distinguished the Bellevue Avenue district until the 1890s, when large walls enclosed the newly built Beaux Arts houses.*

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<sup>25</sup> Downing, Andrew Jackson, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1969.

<sup>26</sup> Ernest W. Bowditch, "The Year 1881 at the Office," *Office Work-Personalities II*, no. 10, *Bowditch Family Papers*, (Salem: Essex Institute).

As summer houses filled the available parcels of Bellevue Avenue, Kay Street, Old Beach Road, Rhode Island Avenue and Ochre Point, attentions turned to the southern part of the island for new territory. Both locals and summer residents speculated in land development in this period, purchasing large lots of land in the present day Ocean Drive area as investments for future growth.<sup>27</sup> They were encouraged by George Champlin Mason, who had championed the idea of a seaside drive along the rocky southern coastline. His articles helped sway public opinion on the benefits of using Newport's natural beauty to full advantage.

“...on the subject of drives and walks we cannot ask better than to urge on all interested (and who are not?) the advantages to be derived from an open shore road around the whole southern portion of the Island...such a road is much wanted by all who love to stroll near the seashore, if opened it would immediately become a fashionable drive of an afternoon.”<sup>28</sup>

Mason's dream became a reality in 1868 with the installation of Ocean Drive connecting Bellevue Avenue, on the eastern side of the city, with Castle Hill, overlooking Narragansett Bay on the west. Unlike the flat terrain of the Bellevue Avenue district, the new drive ran among valleys, coves and rocky promontories. These rugged features constituted its appeal, especially to the leading landscape architect of the day, Frederick Law Olmsted. As the famed designer of Central Park in New York City, Olmsted was the acknowledged leader of landscape design in the United States. In 1884, the King, Glover and Bradley families purchased twenty-seven acres of rolling meadow on the northern side of Ocean Drive and commissioned Olmsted to create a series of curved roads leading to houses designed by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White.<sup>29</sup> The informality of the scheme, the respect for the natural topography of the region and an awareness of sight lines of land and sea distinguish Olmsted's creation. The critics approved, among them Marianna Griswold van Rensselaer who stated, “The new roads are admirably disposed for convenience and beauty.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *City Atlas of Newport*, 1876.

<sup>28</sup> Woodward, Section 8, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> F.L. and J.C. Olmsted, “Plan for Subdivision of Properties in Newport, RI Belonging to Mrs. Edward King, J.H. Glover, Esq., The Hon. C.S. Bradley, G. Gordon King,” Newport Land Evidence Office, Plat Book 1, pp. 30-31, Newport City Hall, Newport, RI.

<sup>30</sup> Marianna Griswold van Rensselaer, “Newport-II,” *Forest and Garden* 1 (5 December 1888), p. 483.



George Champlin Mason (1820-1894). *Rocky Farm and Cherry Neck*. Oil on canvas, circa 1854. Courtesy of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum. *This windswept meadowland depicts the southern portion of Newport before the laying out of Ocean Drive in 1868, opening the area to development for summer estates. Born into a prominent Newport family, Mason became a noted landscape painter, illustrator and architect. He was also the editor of the Newport Mercury, using the newspaper to promote Newport as a summer resort.*



Galt & Hoy, New York, NY. *Newport, RI*, 1878. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

*By the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, streets emanated from the Colonial era quarter along the harbor, with Thames and Spring Streets as the main traffic arteries, to Bellevue Avenue, in the foreground, which extended to the southern tip of Aquidneck Island (bottom right side of map). This bird's eye view prominently features the cliffs, rocky coves and beaches rather than the harbor, the usual vantage point for maps and illustrations of Newport until the mid-1800s. The map appealed to the tastes of summer visitors seeking dramatic natural scenery.*



Clarence Stanhope. *Vinland and Ochre Point Avenue*. Photograph, circa 1886. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.



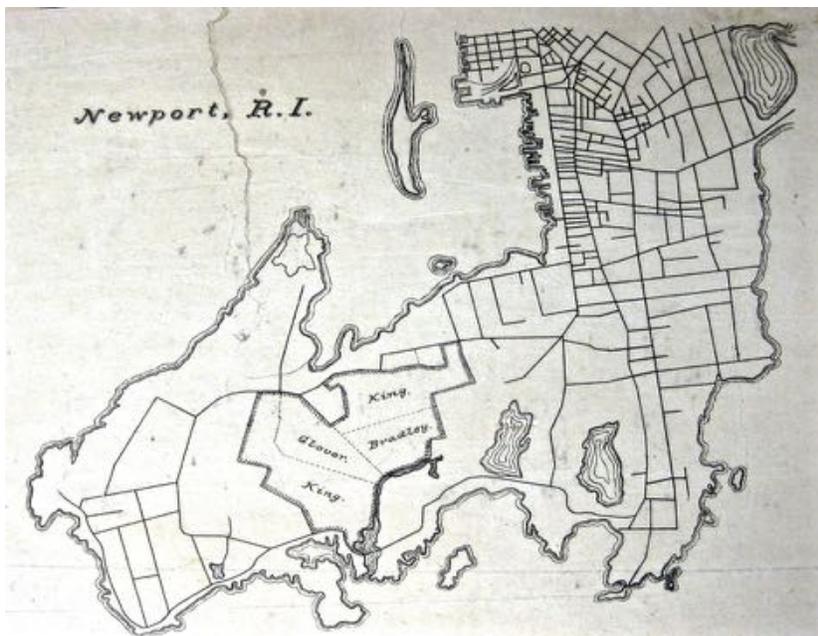
John Tschirch. *Bowery Street*. Photograph, 2016.

*In this view of Bowery Street, between Bellevue Avenue and Spring Street, fences and the overhang of a lush canopy of trees from the summer estates create a shady lane.*



Clarence Stanhope. *Almy's Pond*. Photograph, circa 1900. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*The windswept fields and marshes around Almy's pond afforded extensive views. To the far left is Belcourt and to the far right of the photograph are houses overlooking Bailey's Beach. With the growth of trees and additional building, this open quality no longer remains.*



Map of Ocean Drive from *Proposed Improvements for Newport*, 1913. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*The map depicts the King-Glover-Bradley plat developed by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1884. This large scale real estate development of summer estates featured curving picturesque drives offering views of the hilly countryside and the sea.*

While the appreciation of nature and scenery preoccupied the developers of summer villas on Bellevue Avenue and Ocean Drive, industry and new technologies were transforming the northern end and central core of the city. Although Newport never became a major manufacturing center, it had a bustling waterfront and an increasing number of year-round residents who made their homes in the new neighborhoods along Broadway from Equality Park to One Mile Corner and in the blocks around southern Thames Street. The methodically laid out streets and housing lots served middle and lower income residents working for the U.S. Navy and in a variety of small to middle-size businesses.

As railroads traversed the nation in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, they made their arrival in Newport in February of 1867 with the completion of the Old Colony Railroad.<sup>31</sup> The railroad tracks cut through the Point, across the cove bordering on Bridge Street and terminated at the harbor-side wharves in an integrated transportation system linking Newport by land and sea to the mainland. By the 1900s, the cove forming the southern border of the Point was entirely filled in to allow for train traffic. The large 18<sup>th</sup> century parcels of land on the Point, once containing between three to five houses and large garden plots, were subdivided and filled in with Victorian buildings, increasing the density of the streetscapes.

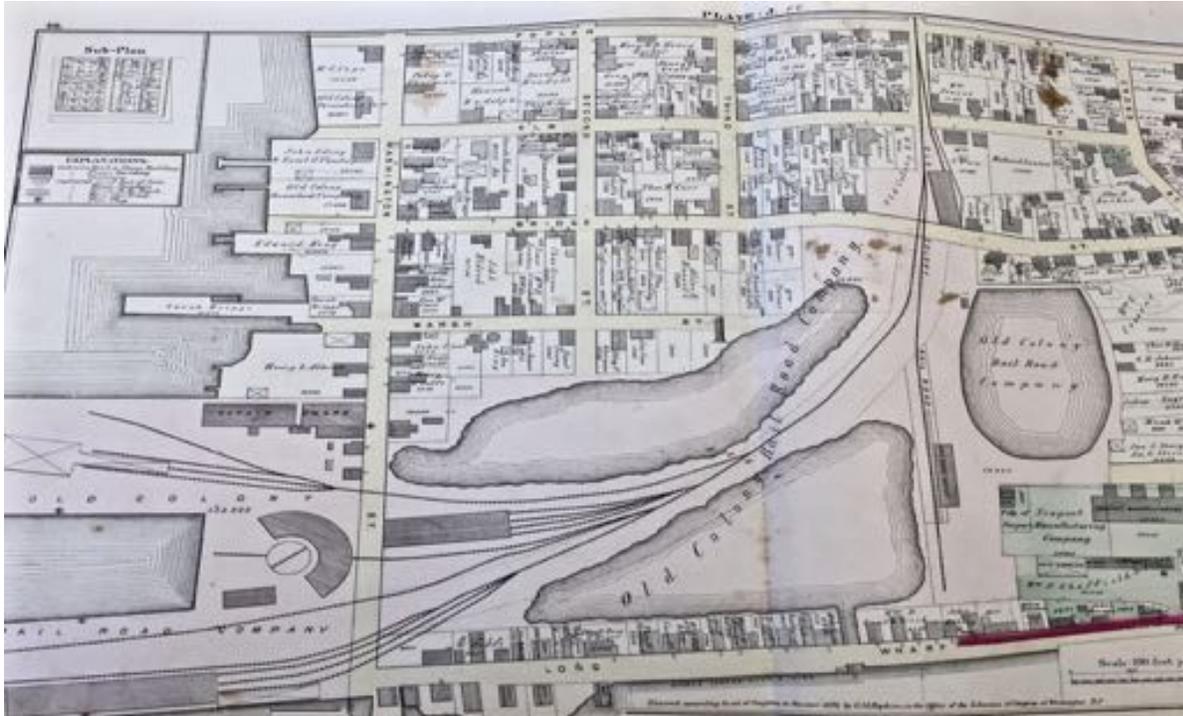


Unknown Artist. *The Old Colony Station on The Point*. Photograph, circa 1870. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

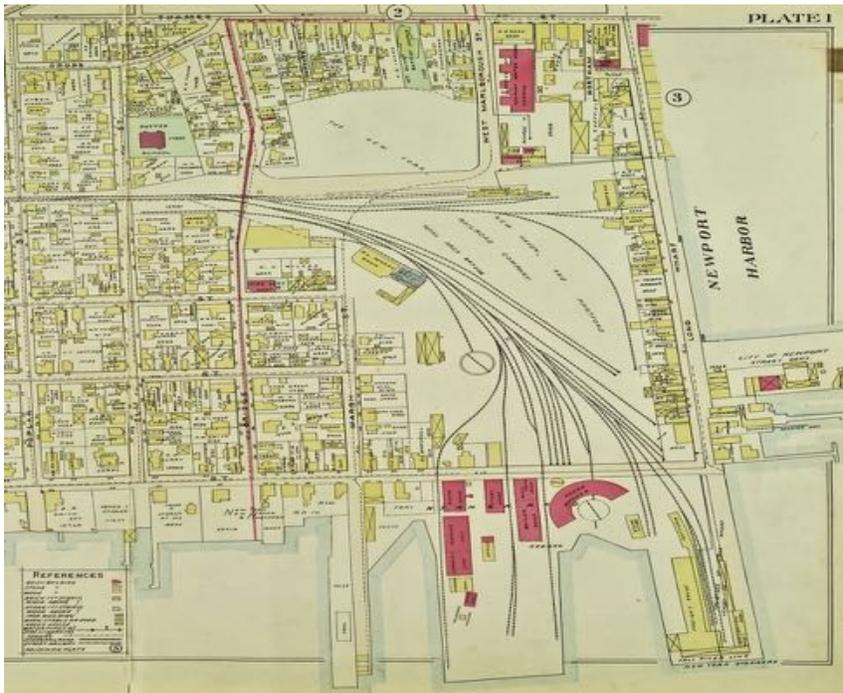
*The railroad tracks traversed the historic cove, entirely filled in by the early 1900s.*

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<sup>31</sup> History of Old Colony Railroad. [www.ocnr.com/history1.htm](http://www.ocnr.com/history1.htm)



*Atlas of the City of Newport, 1876. The Point. Courtesy of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum.*



G.M. Hopkins, Philadelphia, PA. *City Atlas of Newport, 1907*. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*The Old Colony Railroad filled in the cove on the southern border of the Point (right side of map) to link with the wharves. The once large lots of the Colonial era houses were in-filled with Victorian buildings.*



*Atlas of the City of Newport, 1907. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society. From Bull Street to Equality Park, the fields on both sides of Broadway were developed during the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The dotted dark and light lines running down Broadway, Spring Street and Washington Square depict streetcar tracks, established in 1889.*



Unknown Artists. Photograph, circa 1880. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.  
*View of Broadway at the intersection of Spring Street, to the left, and Marlborough Street, to the far right. Streetcar tracks appear in the center of the street.*



John Tschirch. *Bull Street*. Photograph, 2016.  
*The development of the lands at either side of Broadway in the 1860s through the 1890s produced a streetscape of diverse architecture reflecting the Victorian taste for complex building facades of towers, gables, porches and bay windows.*

In addition to trains and steamships, streetcars were the other technological marvel introduced to Newport during a burgeoning industrial age. Not all residents warmly greeted the new form of transportation. The first attempt to establish street rails in the 1860s was a failure, followed by another defeat in 1884.<sup>32</sup> Summer residents in particular took offense at the incursion the street cars made into their resort enclave. The *Providence Journal* reported, “it would be annoying to these people to be obliged to move to allow passage of so vulgar and plebian thing as a horse car.”<sup>33</sup> Undaunted, the proponents of mass transit fought on. In 1889, the newly organized Newport Street Railway initiated placement of tracks along Broadway, Washington Square, Spring Street, Levin Street and Bath Road. This prompted the creation of the Newport Improvement Association with a powerful coterie of industrial titans at its head, among them William Waldorf Astor who stated, “such a road would be a standing danger to life, a serious detriment to the value of property, and an irreparable injury to the renowned beauty of the place.”<sup>34</sup> Although a streetcar system was successfully launched in the summer of 1889, the tracks did not go to Bellevue Avenue or Ocean Drive. The routes became indicators of social status and privilege. Streetcars plied the working and middle class districts, while staying away from the wealthy and fashion conscious who retreated to the privacy and exclusivity of their tree-laden boulevards and seaside drives.



Unknown Artist. *Old Home Week on Washington Square*. Postcard, 1900. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*Streetcars ran from the square to Long Wharf. The Brick Market is to the left of the photo.*

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<sup>32</sup> D. Scott Malley, “Mass Transit in Rhode Island, Part 7,” *The First Rhode Island Trolleys: Woonsocket and Newport*. *Old Rhode Island Magazine*, September 1994.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



Unknown Artist. *Washington Square*. Photograph, circa 1900. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*View looking east towards Colony House, to the right.*



Anthony Caralazzolo. *Atlantic Fleet Party in Washington Square*. Photograph, 1922. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

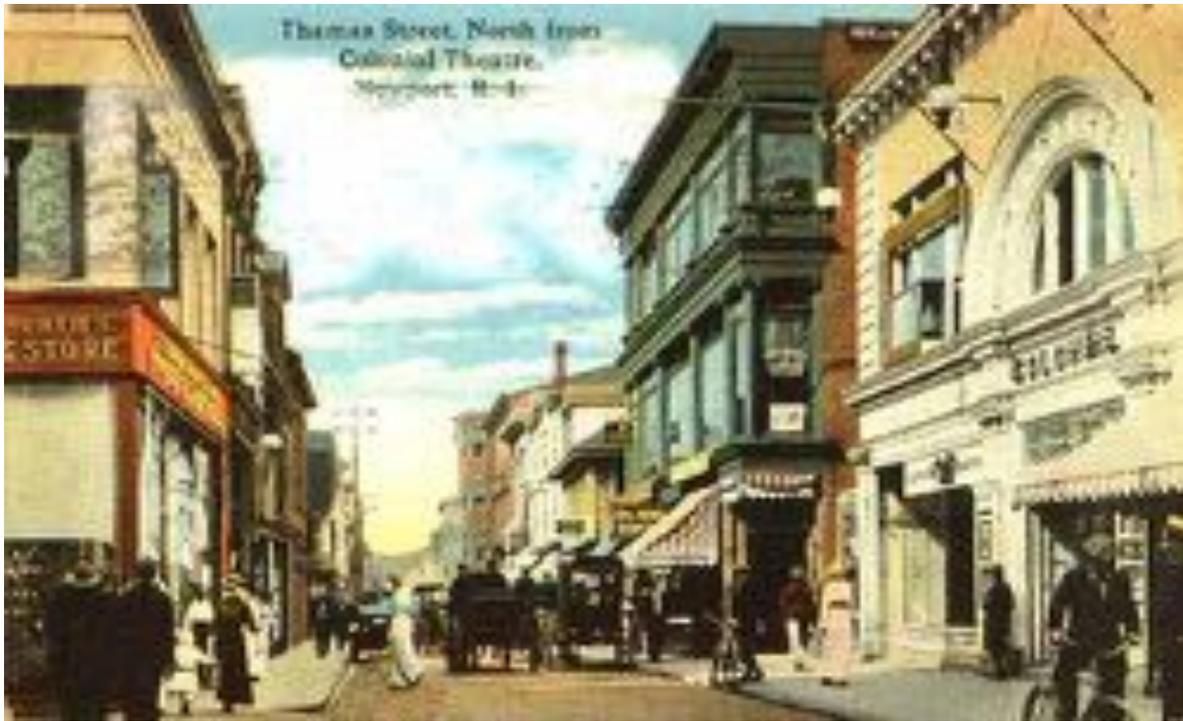
*Streetcar tracks run down the center of the square.*



Unknown Artist. Spring Street. Photograph, circa 1920. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.



Unknown Artist. *Thames Street and Washington Square*. Photograph, circa 1890. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

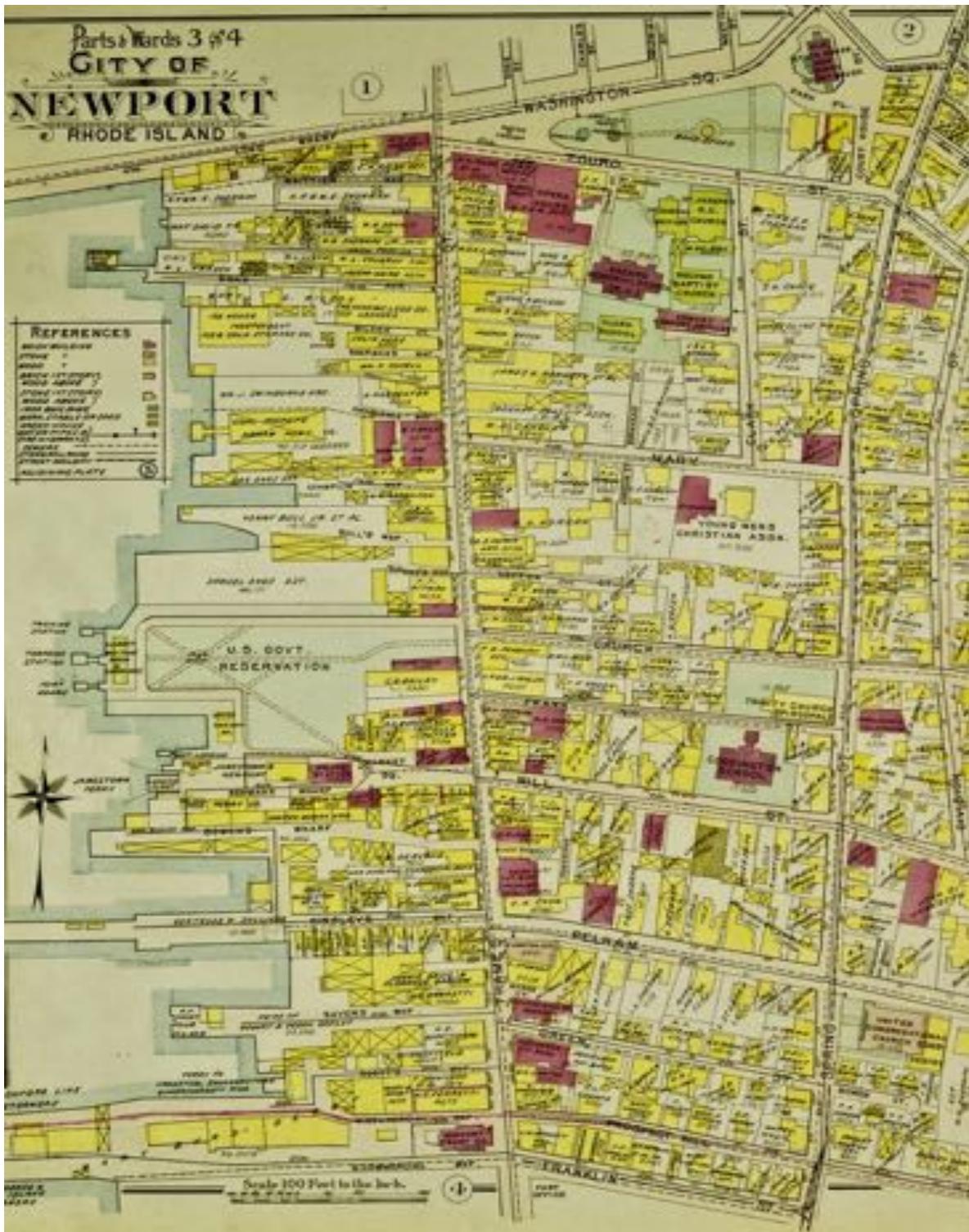


Unknown Artist. *Thames Street*. Postcard, circa 1900. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

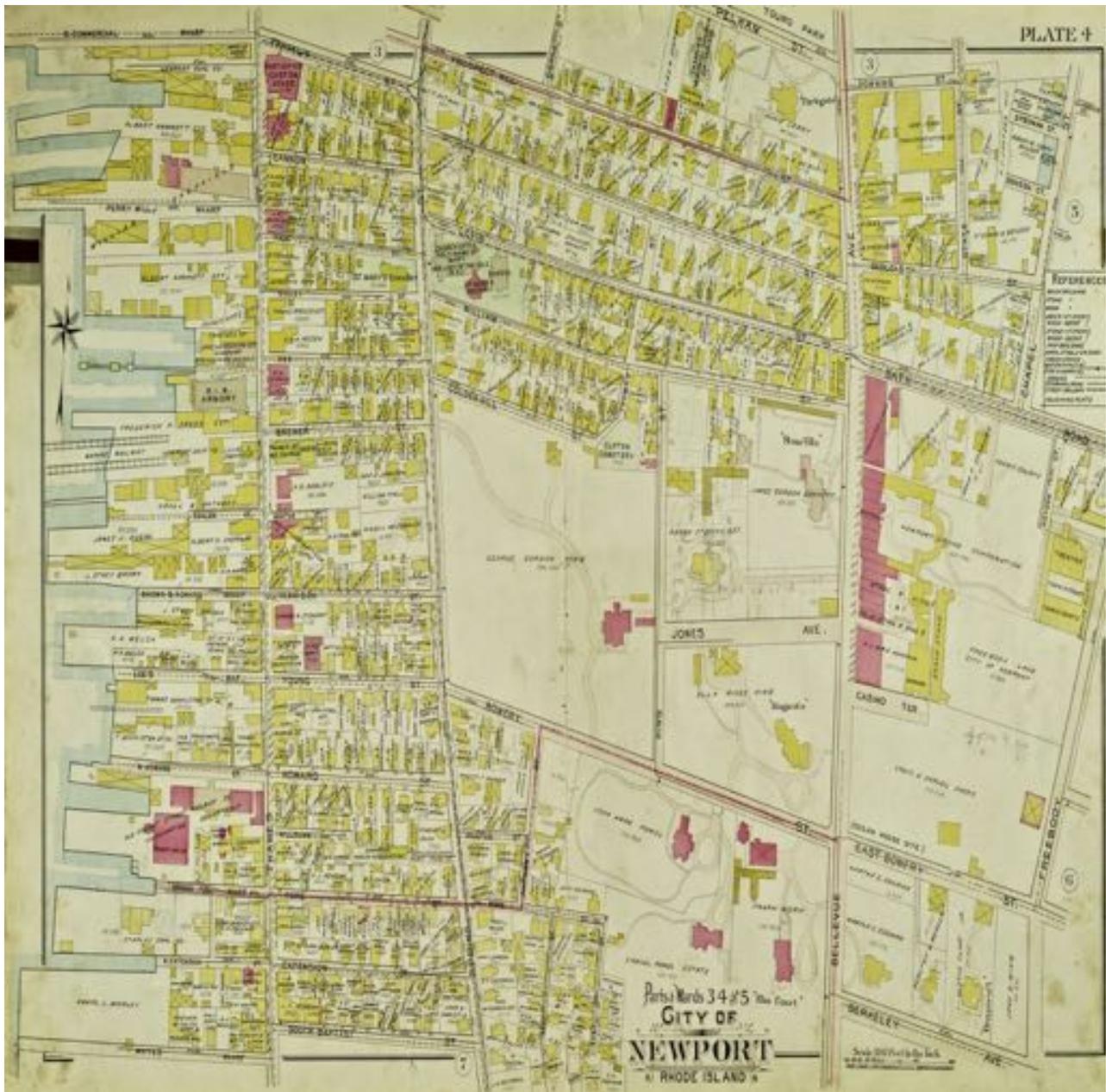
*Victorian stores, theaters and commercial buildings replaced many of the older colonial era buildings along Thames Street, but the thoroughfare itself retained its colonial era width, causing over a half century of debate and planning efforts about its possible redesign.*



Unknown Artist. *Thames Street, from Washington Square to Franklin Street*. Photograph, circa 1890. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.



*City Atlas of Newport, 1907. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society. The colonial era plan of Thames Street and its wharves remained fully intact into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The density of buildings increased as the garden plots of the colonial era were filled in with commercial structures and additional housing.*



*City Atlas of Newport, 1907. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society. The two types of 19<sup>th</sup> century Newport's streetscapes are apparent in this Atlas Plate #4 depicting lower Thames Street from Franklin Street to Mile's End. On the left side of the map, the working waterfront is densely built with commercial structures on the wharves, while on the right side of the map, depicts the expansive lawns and serpentine drives of summer estates built between 1840 and 1890.*

As summer cottages expanded near the seashore, and trains and streetcars made incursions into the city, the 18<sup>th</sup> century quarter remained relatively untouched and began to appeal to the sentiments of artists taken by its associations with a heroic age of founding settlers and Revolutionary patriots. New warehouses and shops did appear on many of the old wharves and department stores rose along Thames Street, but the majority of Colonial buildings remained intact. Admirers did not come to build, they came to venerate, extol and project romantic views and ancient virtues on the place.

The architect Charles Follen McKim, the third American to be educated at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, saw the value of these old streets and buildings. With his classical training and eye for architectural form, he appreciated the historical layers of Newport's past. In 1874, he commissioned a series of photographs to record 18<sup>th</sup> century streetscapes and structures.<sup>35</sup> As the nation approached its Centennial in 1876, Newport served as a powerful site of inspiration for the Colonial Revival. Many other architects, writers, poets and painters began to admire the intimate scale and layers of history of the city, which appealed to their picturesque sensibilities.



William James Stillman. *Vernon House*, at the corner of Mary and Clark Streets. Photograph, 1874. Charles McKim Portfolio. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

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<sup>35</sup> The photographs commissioned by Charles Follen McKim are in the collection of the Newport Historical Society.

Henry James, enchanted by the old town, viewed it as a remnant of a mythic past. Time had conferred a venerable air about the town, which the author duly noted.

“I have been quite awe-struck by the ancient State House (the Colony House of 1741) that overlooks the ancient Parade, an edifice ample, majestic, archaic, of the finest proportions and full of a certain public Dutch dignity...Here was the charming impression of a treasure of antiquity...the wide, cobbly, sleepy space...in the shadow of the State House, must have been much more of a Van der Heyden, or somebody of that sort than one could have dreamed.<sup>36</sup>

James writes of Newport in a painterly way, using color, light and perspective and the moods they evoke, comparing Washington Square and the Colony House to old Dutch paintings. He was also taken by the texture of the streets.

“What indeed but very old ladies did they resemble, the little very old streets?... In this mild town corner, when it was so indicated that the grass should be growing between the primitive paving stones, and where indeed I honestly think it mainly is, whatever remains of them, ancient peace had appeared formerly to reign- though attended by the ghost of ancient war, inasmuch as these had indubitably been the haunts of our auxiliary French officers during the Revolution.”<sup>37</sup>

The author imagined the inhabitants that lived in the streetscapes and buildings of the old city, well aware that cultural voices could and did call out to those who stopped, looked and listened. His writing imbued the urban scene with personality and its own particular psychology of space and emotion. For James, Newport was cast as both a place and a person with distinct character traits. Nobility, bravery, vanity, gluttony and a host of other qualities were elicited by the buildings, lanes and landscapes encountered by the writer on his literal and figurative wanderings.

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<sup>36</sup> James. p. 351.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 351.

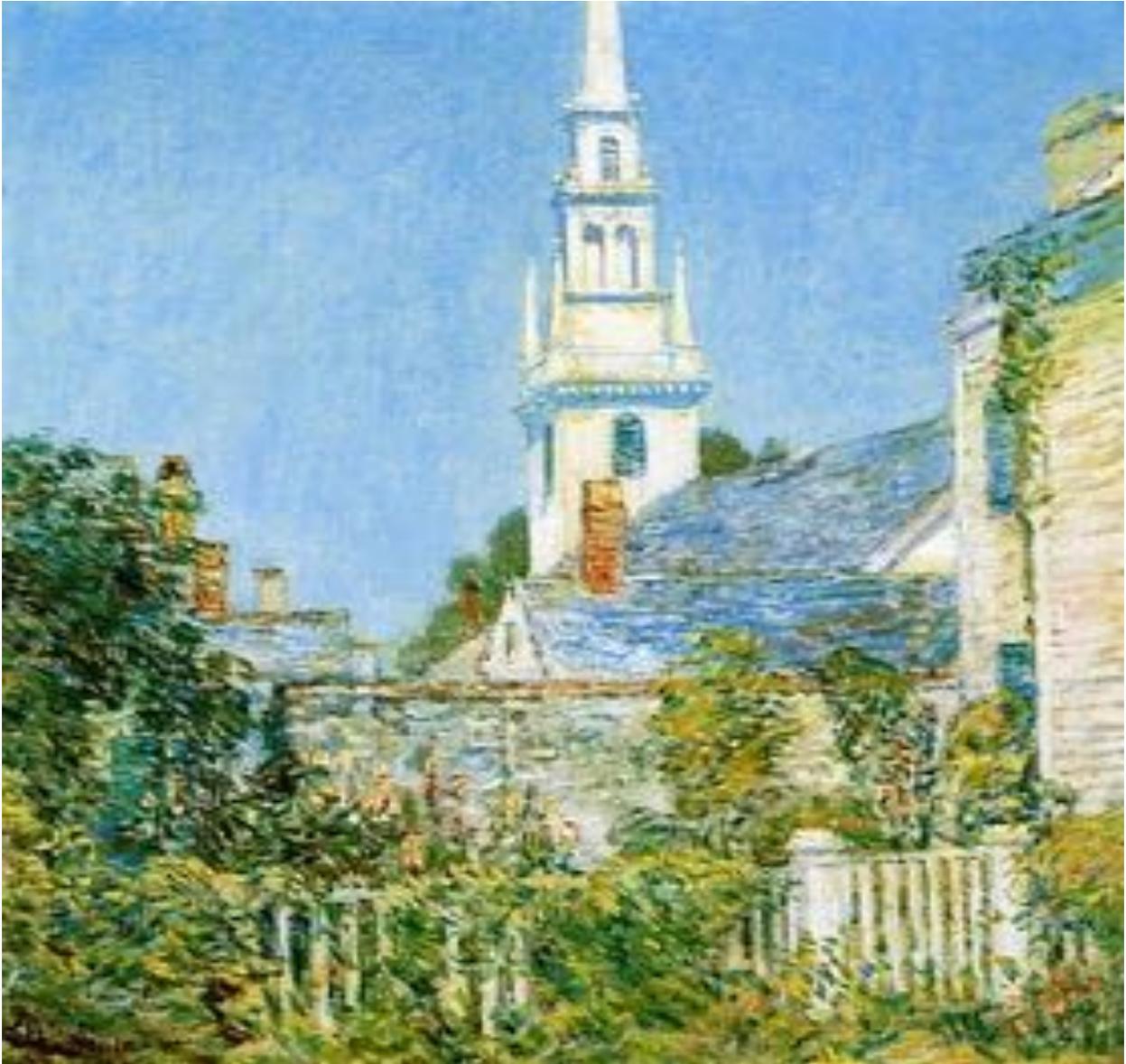


Unknown Artist. *Marlborough and Duke Streets*. The Old Town. Photograph, circa 1900.  
Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*Colonial structures with added stairwells, sheds and wings produced the layered and weathered appearance of streetscapes that appealed to artists and photographers.*

The romantic view illustrated in James's writing and the antiquarian interest exhibited by McKim's photography mixed easily in Childe Hassam's paintings of Newport. This leading American Impressionist used the soaring steeple of Trinity Church (1726), the notable landmark to the city's glory days as a Colonial seaport, in his work *White Church at Newport*. With soft dappled brush strokes, the artists rendered the white steeple among the cluster of buildings, lush trees and gardens of the old town. His is truly a mere hazy suggestion of the old church, imbued with a diffused light and soft contours inherent in the impressionist works of the time. He has made an iconic image, calling upon history to confer gravitas to his work while executing it in the modern painting techniques of the day.

Captivated by the ancient air of the town, McKim, James and Hassam in written, photographic, painted and built form viewed the 18<sup>th</sup> century town as a venerable spot, a place firmly in the lexicon of America's foundation myth and an inspiration for their own work, where the past could inform the present. By the 1890s, the juxtaposition of old and new in Newport became even more striking. Linked to the mainland by train and steamship, Newport was no longer an isolated coastal enclave. The old quarter became increasingly appreciated for its connection to the colonial past while among the Victorian resort of wooden cottages rose a new gilded city.



Frederick Childe Hassam. *White Church at Newport*, also known as a *White Church in a New England Town*, 1901. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

## THE GILDED CITY: 1890-1914

Classically inspired, massive in scale and unabashedly gilded, the architecture and landscape design of the 1890s achieved an imperial splendor. This glittering city was imposed on the previous picturesque wooden Newport of the Victorian age. Richard Morris Hunt led the way. As the first American architect to be trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, he had seen first-hand the chateaux and palaces of Europe, which he would recreate on the cliffs of Newport. He mastered the principles of classical design from rationally developed planning to the precise rendering of historically inspired detail. Furthermore, he understood how to create architectural pageantry as a backdrop for social theater. In 1897, *Munsey's Magazine* reported, "Society in Newport is always on dress parade..."<sup>38</sup> The afternoon carriage ride became a key moment in this social theater, a time when the elegant streets, the imposing gates and opulent houses played backdrop to fashion. Consuelo Vanderbilt recalled this particular role of the avenue in the 1890s, writing, "...we proceeded in state down Bellevue Avenue. And society rolled by in the elegant equipages one saw in those days when to be well turned out on wheels with a handsome pair of horses was as necessary to one's standard of luxury as a fine house."<sup>39</sup>



Unknown Artist. *Bellevue Avenue at The Elms*. Photo, circa 1905. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

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<sup>38</sup> "The Palace Cottages of Newport," *Munsey's Magazine*, September 1897.

<sup>39</sup> Consuelo Vanderbilt Balsan, *The Glitter and the Gold*, (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 52.

*The urn topped stone pillars of the gates to The Elms introduced a classical formality to Bellevue Avenue.*

The Beaux Arts Classicism espoused by Hunt and his contemporaries, aided by the riches of America's industrial and financial oligarchs, produced an enclave of palatial houses in Newport that bespoke of a new aristocracy of wealth. Monumental buildings were appearing throughout the nation in this period when the United States surpassed Great Britain, France and Germany in the production of coal, steel and oil. Now a world economic force, America was creating an architectural backdrop of monumental proportions to express this new-found supremacy. In 1904, Barr Ferree produced *American Estates and Gardens* to celebrate the country's lavish new residences. The chapter entitled, "A Group of Newport Palaces," highlighted the city's gilded enclave.

"The architectural thought that lay behind the creation of Versailles is identical with the ideas that have brought the great houses of Newport into existence. It is true that Versailles was a single palace, built by a despotic monarch for his own delight, while Newport is an aggregation of palaces, built not by despots, but by free American citizens. But the palace of Versailles was a vast architectural background for court fetes and festivities of all sorts. Just so the palaces of Newport are architectural backgrounds for the pleasures and sports of its inhabitants....Newport, at all events, illustrates splendid living in the most splendid fashion it has yet attained in America., so far as a group of houses and people is concerned."<sup>40</sup>

The author accurately expresses the historical and cultural inspiration for the magnificence of Newport's Gilded Age houses. His language also reveals the nationalistic and self-congratulatory tone taken by many during America's rise to world prominence in the early 1900s. The stone and marble palaces of this era were most assertively courtly stages for the nation's power elite who transformed the wooden seaside resort of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century into an opulent stone city at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bellevue Avenue and Ochre Point became ever grander streetscapes marked by a new scale of monumentality.

The once open lawns of earlier houses were no longer in fashion. Privacy, distance and exclusion were made manifest by high gates and iron fences that concealed from view the newer French chateaux and Italian palazzos. Neo-Classical style pillars, posts and elaborate metal grille work introduced a monumentality to the leafy streets of the summer resort. Rather than the curving drives and serpentine walks of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century villas, the Beaux Arts palaces were comprised of entrance courts and drives in formal, straight axes and elaborate parterre gardens laid out in geometric precision in the manner of Renaissance and Baroque landscapes.

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<sup>40</sup> Barr Ferree, *American Estates and Gardens*, (New York: Munn and Company, 1904), pp. 63-67.



John Tschirch. *Two Walls*. Photograph, 2016.

*A Beaux Arts marble wall of 1892 (left) by Richard Morris Hunt at Marble House meets a Renaissance Revival red brick and limestone wall of 1859 by Calvert Vaux. These walls represent two different approaches to the streetscape of Bellevue Avenue: the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century picturesque manner of low walls and fences affording views across open lawns; the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century formality of high Beaux Arts walls and iron gates offering greater privacy and excluding the house from the public gaze, while leaving just a hint of a sightline so magnificence could be partly seen. Calvert Vaux was in charge of architectural planning for Central Park in New York with Frederick Law Olmsted. Richard Morris Hunt, proclaimed the “Dean of American Architecture” by his contemporaries, introduces an imperial scale and classical style to architectural design.*



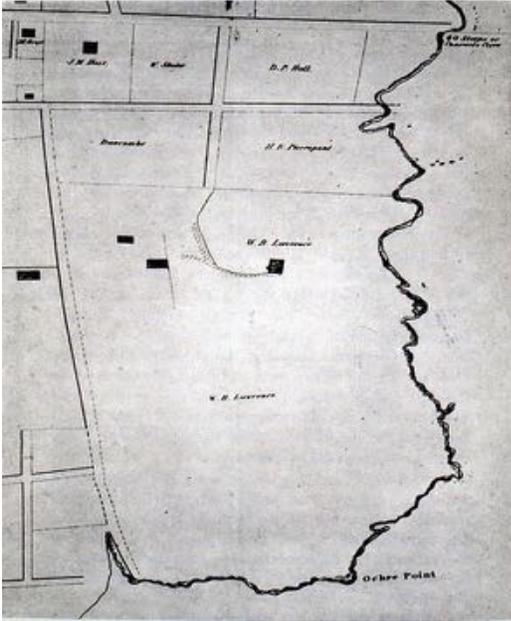
John Tschirch. *Marble Wall*. Photograph, 2016.

*The high wall of Marble House screens most of the main building from public view, offering a tempting glimpse at the grandeur beyond.*

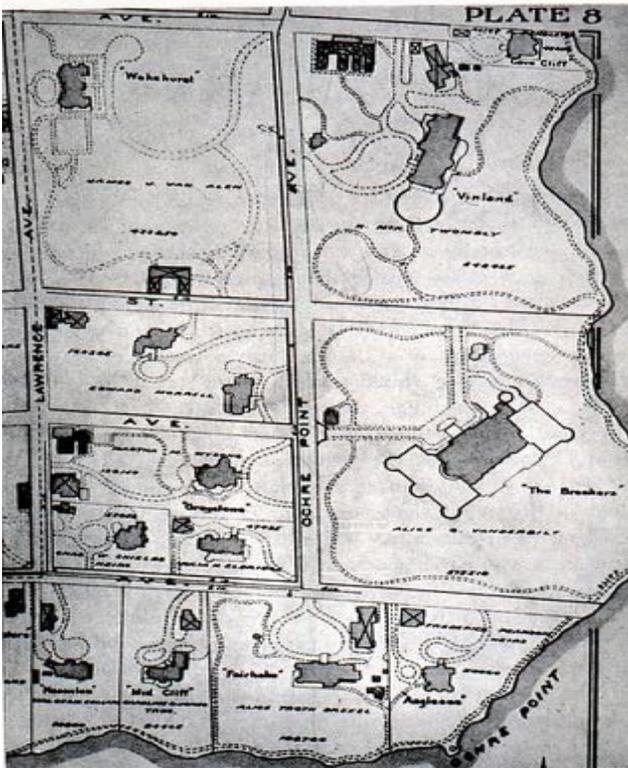


John Tschirch. *Beaulieu*. Photograph, 2016.

*The low brick wall of Beaulieu allows for a view across the grounds to the main house.*

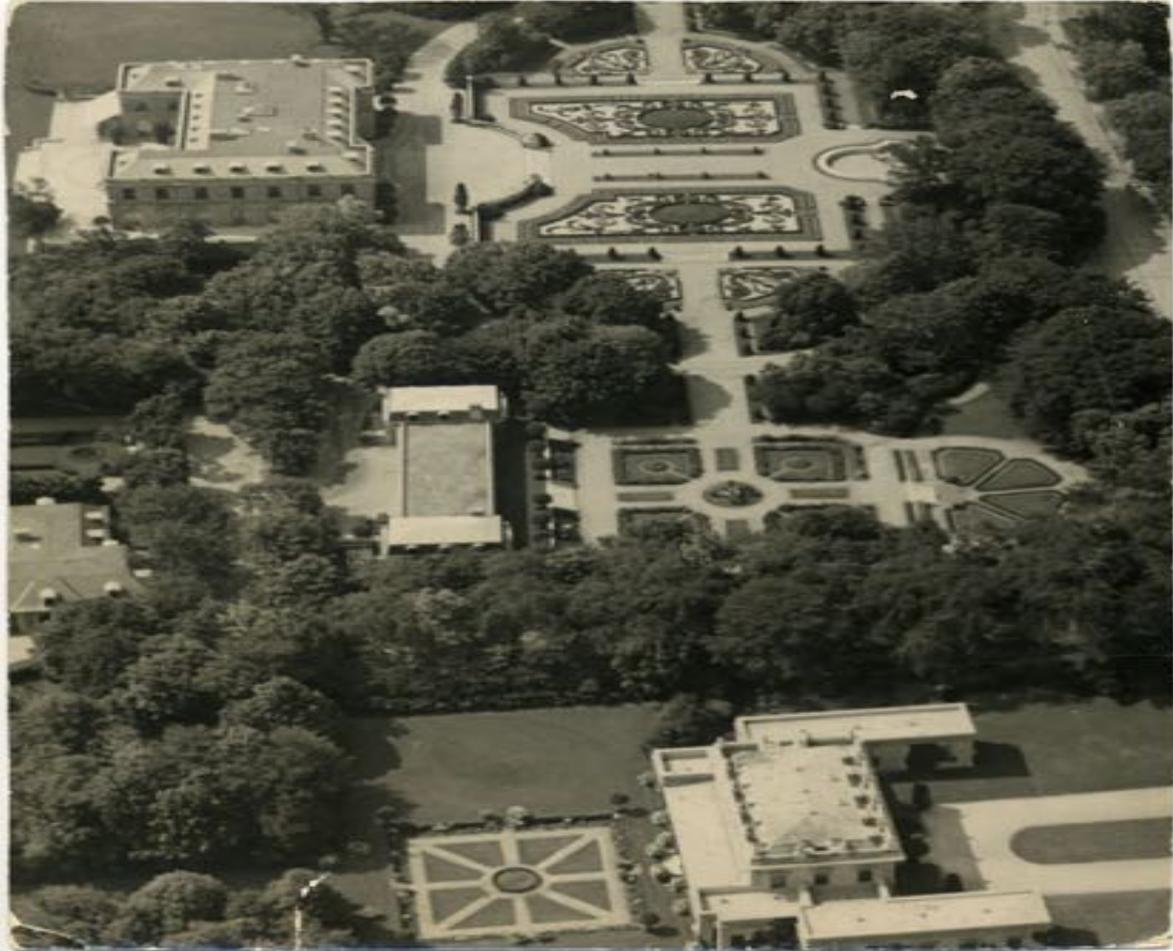


Matthew Dripps, N.Y. and B.I. Tilley, Newport. Ochre Point, from *Map of the City of Newport*, 1859. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society



L. J. Richards and Co., Springfield, Ma. Ochre Point from *City Atlas of Newport*, 1907. Courtesy of the Preservation Society of Newport County.

*Ochre Point evolved from a windswept meadow to a highly cultivated, formally organized enclave of summer houses in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.*



Unknown Artist. *Aerial View*. Photograph, circa 1940. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*Clarendon Court (1903,) in the lower part of the photo, and Miramar (1915), in the upper part of the photo, imposed a classical grandeur on the landscape with formal forecourts and geometrically designed gardens inspired by 17<sup>th</sup> century French parterres.*

Grandiose houses as a major presence in Newport's urban scenography elicited both praise and censure from architectural critics and social observers alike. Henry James wrote a highly prescient observation of both the built and natural environment when he visited in 1906. He knew the city well, having spent his youth in Newport. It was, for him, not merely a collection of streets, buildings and scenery, but a poignant place of memory touchingly described as,

"...a thousand delicate secret places, dear to the disinterested rambler, small mild 'points' and promontories, far away little lonely sandy coves, rock-set lily-sheeted ponds, almost hidden, and shallow Arcadian summer-haunted valleys, with the sea just over some stony shoulder: a whole world that called out to the long afternoons of youth."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> James. p. 345.

The author longed for the idyll of a remembered natural paradise in the face of the newer, larger, grander America that confronted him on his journey back to his homeland in the early 1900s. James's musings dwelled not only on the landscape, but the buildings within it. He viewed them as a distillation of his full melancholy at the state of American architecture, social norms and cultural life as he wrote,

"...thanks to the pilers-on of gold, the fortune, the history of its beauty: that it now bristles with the villas and palaces into which the cottages have now turned...it was most touching of all to go back to dimmest days, such as now appear anti-deluvian, when ocean-drives, engineered by landscape artists and literally macadamized all the way, were still in the lap of time."<sup>42</sup>



Artist Unknown. Postcard, circa 1905. Private Collection.

The myth of a lost paradise permeates James's observations. He used the city in its entirety, both its natural and manmade features, as a metaphor for the state of American culture. As he wandered the old town and the newer gilded districts, he abandoned longings for the past and turned instead to criticism of the present and forebodings for the future, releasing the full weight of his prophetic powers on the gilded realms of Bellevue Avenue and Ochre Point.

"The white elephants, as one may call them, all cry and no wool, all house and no garden, make now, for three or four miles, a barely interrupted chain, and I dare say I think of them best, and of the distressful, inevitable waste they represent. The place itself was more than ever, to the fancy, like some dim simplified ghost of a small Greek island where the clear walls of some pillared portico or pavilion, perched afar, looked like those temples of the gods, and where Nature, deprived of that ease in merely massing herself on which 'American Scenery,' as we lump it together, is apt to

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 346.

depend for its effect, might have shown a piping shepherd on a hillside or attached a mythic image to any point of rocks. What an idea, originally, to have seen this miniature spot of earth, where the sea-nymphs of the curved sands, at worst, might have chanted back to the shepherds, a mere breeding-ground for white elephants!”<sup>43</sup>

The landscape James so loved and the monumental buildings he so despised became a touchstone for many on the debate about the meaning of art, culture and society as the nation basked in the high noon of its American Renaissance. Newport’s natural setting and artistic heritage prompted nostalgia for an imagined past. The future, however, could be as subjective as the past, open to equally romantic whims and hopes. Newport’s turn of the century opulence sparked virulent reaction. Fearless in his judgment, James boldly decreed the fate of gilded houses and the skyline of excess they imposed on the urban scene.

“They are queer and conscious and lumpish-some of them, as with an air of the brandished proboscis, really grotesque-which their averted owners roused from a witless dream wonder what in the world is to be done with them. The answer to which, I think, can only be that there is nothing to be done, nothing but to let them stand there always, vast and blank for reminder to those concerned of the witlessness, and peculiarly awkward vengeance of affronted proportion and discretion.”<sup>44</sup>

James crafted an insightful, poignant portrait interweaving historical and emotional memory, keen observation and contemporary criticism as he predicted a doomed future for the gilded city. Other artists approached Newport in their own way and with different skill sets. In each case, the city inspired and motivated them to address its mythic past, glamorous present and uncertain future. In 1912, F. Lauriston Bullard extolled the virtues of the colonial quarter and doubted the value of the gilded city as he wrote,

“...nowhere else in America do romance, beauty and fashion so combine and conspire to win the affections and to dazzle the imagination...Both the island and the town... alike charm the imaginative visitor by their odd mixing of old and new, and by the stories which history and tradition associate with the wharves and streets and quaint doorways...to many the chief charm of Newport will be the realization of the romantic and historic as actual living presences, pervading the whole place, brooding over the glittering present for the old houses, looking on calmly and undisturbed at all that wealth has wrought of luxury and display.”<sup>45</sup>

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. took a very different approach than many writers and painters, who tended to focus on the mood and atmosphere of the place. Olmsted had a task to perform.

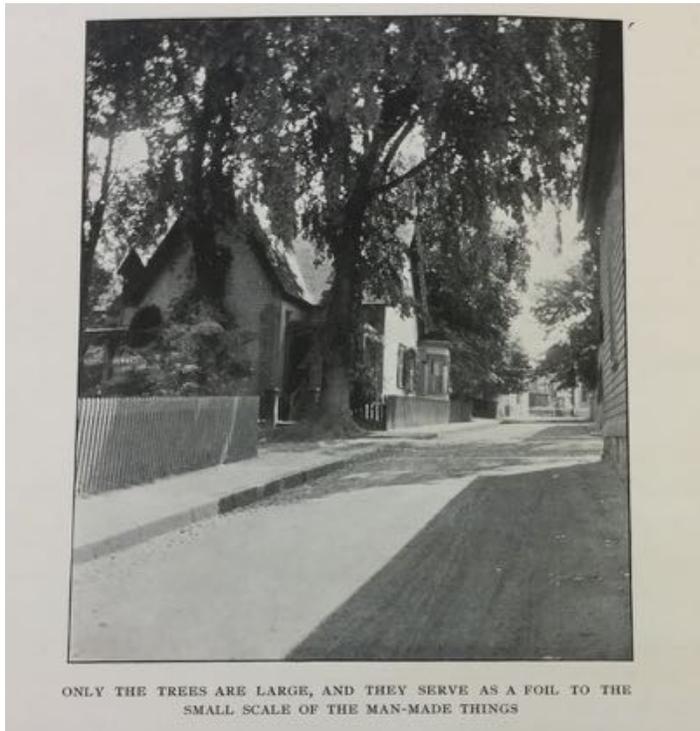
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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 354.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 354.

<sup>45</sup> F. Lauriston Bullard, *Historic Summer Haunts from Newport to Portland*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1912), pp. 1-3.

Engaged by the Newport Improvement Association, he embarked on an urban study integrating past with present and future. In 1913, he produced *A Plan for the Improvement of Newport* incorporating both aesthetic and functional values.<sup>46</sup> The character of entire streetscapes and districts as well as the needs of transportation management were sensitively combined in a comprehensive study, the first by many architects and urban planners throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century who attempted to balance the rising tensions between preserving historic integrity and allowing for modern amenities.

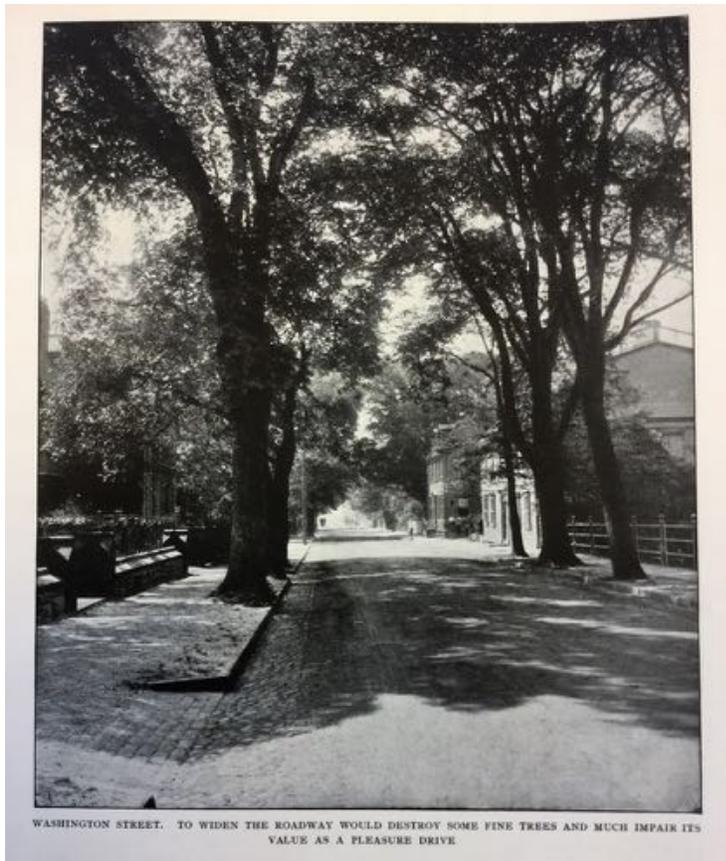


View of Mary Street, 1913. *A Plan for the Improvement of Newport, 1913*. Frederick Law Olmsted. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*Olmsted analyzed streets, buildings and vegetation as essential elements in creating a livable urban environment.*

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<sup>46</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Plan for the Improvement of Newport, RI. A Report Prepared for the Newport Improvement Association, 1913*.



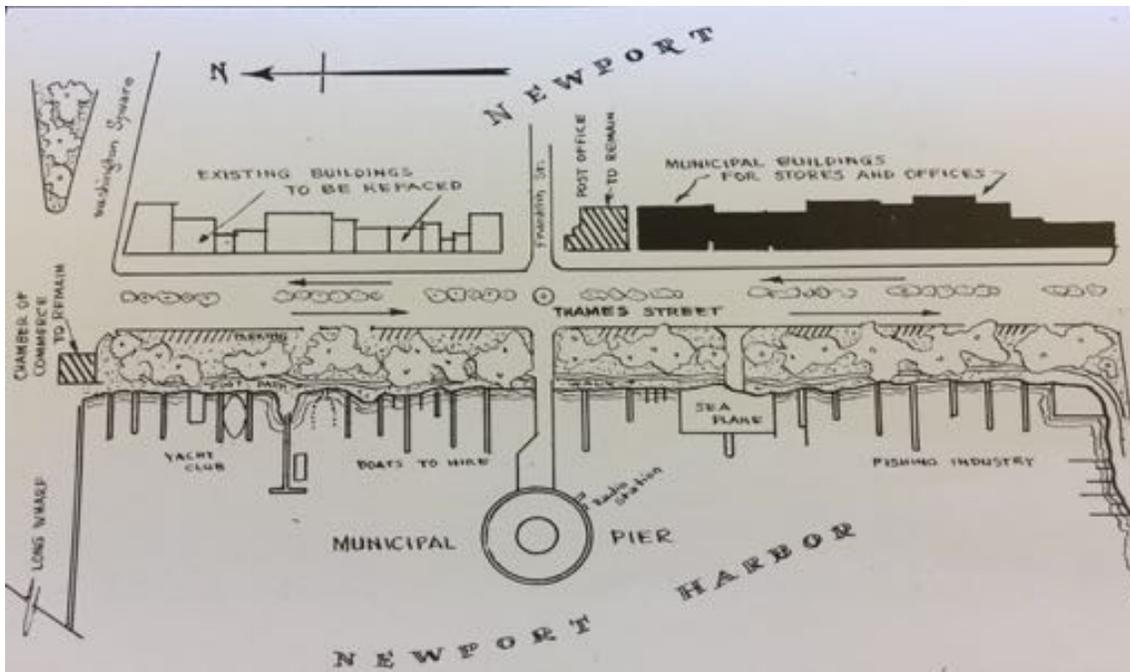
View of Washington Street, 1913. *A Plan for the Improvement of Newport, 1913*, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

Olmsted provided a series of photographs of the streets and tree canopy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century districts with recommendations on care and conservation of living material. He noted that the urban forest was the result not of large scale civic planting but of private homeowners cultivating trees on their own properties. Olmsted also devised schemes for major thoroughfares, including a widened Thames Street and the conversion of Bath Road, leading from the heart of town to Easton's Beach, into a broad avenue to address increasing traffic congestion. He also created a plan for a park on the harbor, a novel idea at a time when commercial activity occupied the waterfront and little aesthetic value had been attributed to the area. In the introduction to the report, Olmsted assessed both positive and negative aspects of the urban fabric and outlined the features he believed made the city a viable urban entity.

"I was impressed anew with the picturesque charm of Newport. This is certainly not a startling discovery or an original observation, but I want to make it clear that I do not say it lightly...this picturesque quality of the city is a man-made affair, even though based on favorable natural opportunities and even though not deliberately planned. Its loss, if it is to be lost, will just as certainly be due to the action and the neglect of the people of the city."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Olmsted, p. 6.



Plan for the expansion of Thames Street. *Plan for the Improvement of Newport, RI*. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. 1913. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*Olmsted advocated for the widening of Thames Street and the creation of a waterfront park.*

Olmsted treated Newport as a complete artistic and living entity in a holistic approach to urban planning that valued historic character. His family were well acquainted with the city, having made a major contribution to the appearance of Newport's landscapes over many decades. Frederick Law Olmsted Sr. had designed Morton Park (c. 1885) and the grounds for the Richard Morris Hunt designed "Busk House" (1891) on Ocean Drive. His sons, as the firm of Olmsted Brothers, completed over thirty projects in Newport. One of the recommendations in the 1913 study was the widening of Bath Road to serve as a fitting entry on to Easton's Beach. Senator George Peabody Wetmore, a former Governor of Rhode Island and the owner of Chateau-sur-Mer in Newport, was an ardent supporter of the expansion of the road, which he said could be, "a boulevard of great public usefulness and beauty."<sup>48</sup> With the cooperation of estate owners along Bath Road, Senator Wetmore assisted in the acquisition of land for expansion. He then engaged the Olmsted firm in 1916 for its design and specifications.<sup>49</sup> By 1921, the improved Bath Road was complete. Senator Wetmore and his fellow citizens finally had their grand boulevard from the seaside to the city.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Holly Collins. "Rites of Passage: The Wetmores of Chateau-sur-Mer," (The Preservation Society of Newport County, 2002), p. 44. Bath Road was widened from Easton's Beach to Middleton Avenue, about half way to Bellevue Avenue. Senator Wetmore was an advocate for the widening of Bath Road as early as 1911. He also commissioned the Olmsted firm to work on landscape designs for his Newport estate, Chateau-sur-Mer, in the period 1915 to 1918.

<sup>49</sup> Rhode Island Historical Society, Mss 798 Box 16.

<sup>50</sup> *Atlas of Newport, Jamestown, Middletown and Portsmouth, RI*, Sanborn Map Co., New York, 1921, Plate 3.



Unknown Artist. *Bath Road*. Photograph, circa 1900. Photograph Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*Streetcar tracks led to First Beach. The road was widened from Easton's Beach to the intersection of Bellevue Avenue in the period 1916 to 1921. The road was renamed Memorial Boulevard in 1946. During urban renewal in the late 1960s, the streetcar tracks were removed and the boulevard was extended to link up with America's Cup Avenue along the harbor.*



Sanborn Map and Publishing Co. *Atlas of Newport, Jamestown, Middletown and Portsmouth, RI.*, 1921. Courtesy of the Preservation Society of Newport County.

*Detail of Bath Road expansion from Easton's Beach, on the right, to Edgar Court, on the left.*

In the years between 1890 and 1914, the buildings and streetscapes of Bellevue reflected an enthusiastic embrace of historical styles and a monumental scale in keeping with this confident and expansive era in American life. At its glittering apogee, Newport presented itself as a beacon of self-assurance in the future at the dawn of a new century. Many observers also viewed it as an example of the double edged sword of excess, so aptly expressed by a reporter in 1900.

“Everything in Newport is measured by the scale of millions. Even the flowers preach the gospel of wealth. Nature made it the most beautiful summer resort in the world; man has made it a monument to his colossal vanity. But it has the merit of being a beautiful and magnificent monument.”<sup>51</sup>

Both celebrated and condemned, this gilded city became a touchstone of debate about the nature of wealth and opulence in America. Henry James predicted impending doom while Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.’s *Improvement Plan* attempted to direct the future in a sensitive redesign for parts of Newport in order to create a more livable, modern and aesthetically pleasing environment. Olmsted’s proposals would preoccupy Newport for the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some came to fruition. Some never did, but most of his ideas remain relevant. While recognizing a venerable past and a glamorous present, Newport’s residents and the artists, architects and planners who came to record and reimagine the place during the Gilded Age were on the edge of a precipice, for great changes were about to occur that would reorder the World.

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<sup>51</sup> “Magnificent Newport,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, 1900.

## MODERNISM MEETS PRESERVATION: 1920-70

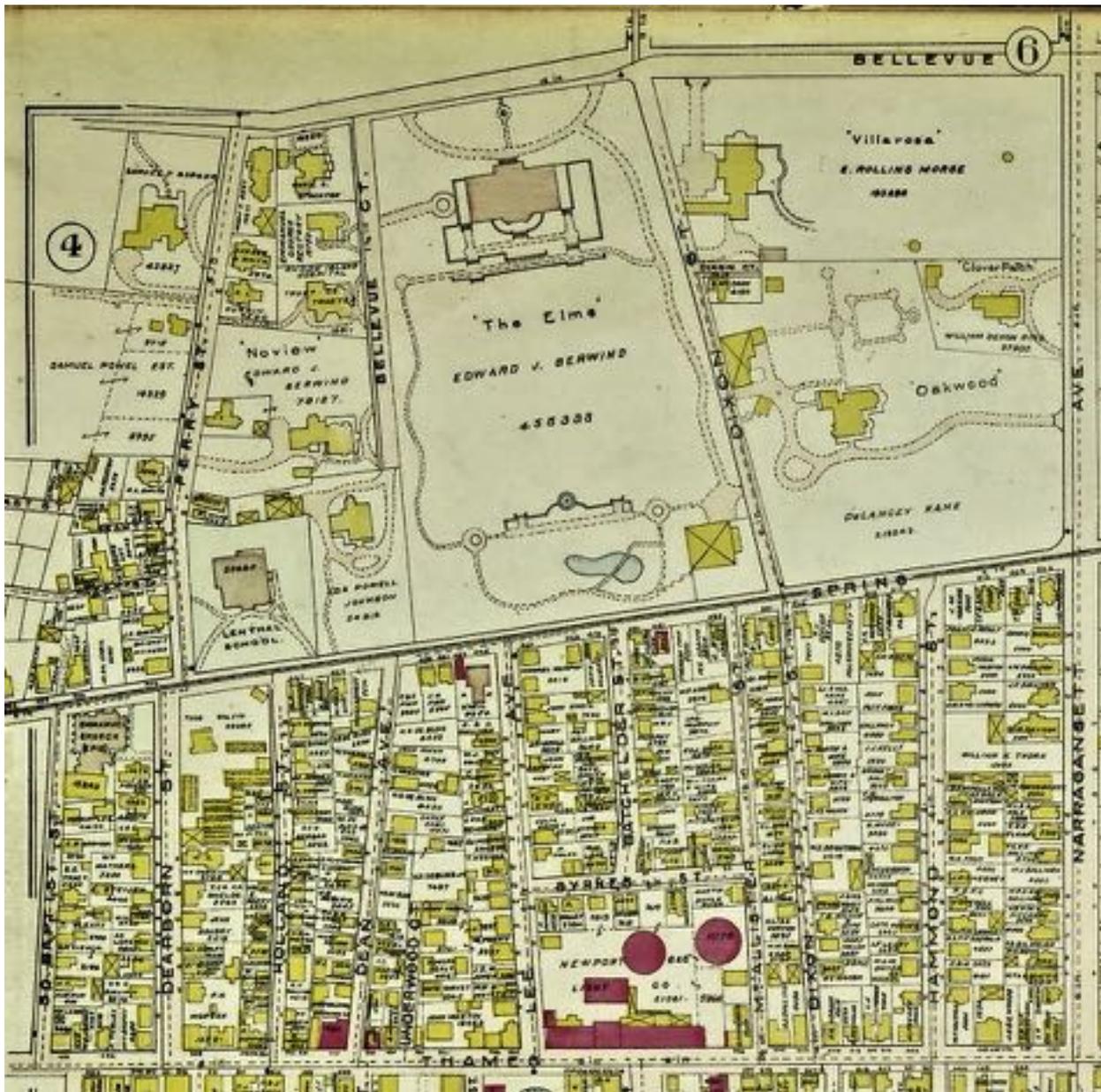
The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought dramatic change to Newport. World War I and the Great Depression altered the social and economic conditions of the nation and eroded the unquestioned position of the very rich who created Newport's gilded resort enclave. The rise of Modernism in architecture and urban planning dealt a death-blow to the historicism and romanticism that underpinned the character of city's urban geography. Increasing physical decay marred the downtown harbor area. The 19<sup>th</sup> century summer villas came to be viewed by many as relics of a corrupt architectural methodology based on excessive historic ornament. Taste, in a place for centuries at the forefront of taste and fashion, had seemed to turn its back on Newport. Modernist principles of social and architectural regeneration struck at the heart of the city as a viable entity. Urban renewal and preservation became two approaches to revitalizing Newport, both with the shared vision of saving the city, but with very different methods.

Isolated on the tip of Aquidneck Island, time might have passed Newport by except for the arrival of the automobile. Since the 1860s, travelers approached the city by train or ferry with only the Stone Bridge in the northeastern corner of the island joining Portsmouth to the mainland at Tiverton. The opening of the Mt. Hope Bridge in 1927 connected Bristol with Aquidneck Island, allowing for increased traffic from all points north. During the 1920s, Newport still enjoyed a period of peace and relative contentment, its old quarter mellowed through time, the tree canopy fully matured, the harbor bustling with business and the great summer houses still fully occupied. The place was ready, yet again, to be recorded by an artist.

Combining keen observation skills with romantic yearning, the writer Thornton Wilder portrayed Newport during the decade as a city of complex historical and cultural layers. In *Theophilus North*, set in 1926, Wilder's young hero is introduced to the nine cities of Newport. The First city exhibits the vestiges of the earliest settlers containing the enigmatic Stone Tower; the Second city is the splendid 18<sup>th</sup> century town with memories of Washington, Rochambeau and Revolutionary glory; the Third city contained what remain of a prosperous seaport along the wharves and docks of Thames Street; the Fourth city belongs to the Army and Navy; the Fifth city was inhabited since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by intellectuals and artists; the Sixth city is for the very rich, the empire builders, a place for fashion and competitive display; the Seventh city swarms with armies of servants; the Eighth city of parasites is dependent on the rich, filled with fortune-hunters, aspirants to social prominence, and prying journalists; the Ninth city is a middle class town, busy with its own life and taking little notice of the other eight cities.<sup>52</sup> Wilder distills the social and physical nuances of Newport in a period before depression and war would take their toll. Drawn to the city's seductive atmosphere and natural charms, like so many before him, Wilder's novel is also replete with his ability to infuse the place with a tender humanity as his characters walk the streets and live out their ambitions, fears and hopes amid centuries old buildings. Wilder wrote *Theophilus North* in 1973. Thus, it was already for him a place of memory as he recalled the city and created heroes, heroines, villains, and all the imperfect types in-between, with the benefit of hindsight.

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<sup>52</sup> Thornton Wilder. *Theophilus North*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1973.) pp. 15-16.



City Atlas of Newport, 1907. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.  
 Plate #7 illustrates the presence of distinctly different social and economic worlds, so insightfully noted by Thornton Wilder in his novel, *Theophilus North*. The densely built neighborhood between Thames and Spring Streets housed domestic servants and the workers in local businesses. Summer estates of the wealthy occupy large lots of open space in the area between Spring Street and Bellevue Avenue.

The advent of World War II forever changed the enchanting, many layered city observed by James, Olmsted, Wilder and others. Newport witnessed increased activity as the primary naval base for the North Atlantic Fleet. The once pastoral northwestern section of the city, overlooking Narragansett Bay, developed quickly with military support buildings and residential developments at Park Holm and Tonomy Hill, initially serving as housing for construction workers and their families.<sup>53</sup> Aquidneck Island would no longer be the isolated coastal retreat of a small population of workers and summer residents. Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century progress connected it to the wider world.



Unknown Artist. *Thames Street*, at the corner of Long Wharf. Photograph, circa 1950. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

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<sup>53</sup> "Newport's Decade of Progress, 1940-1950." *Tenth Annual Report of the Housing Authority of the City of Newport, Rhode Island*. July 29, 1950. Park Holm was completed in 1940 and Tonomy Hill in 1941.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century quarter suffered economic decline while the summer houses of Bellevue Avenue and Ocean Drive, many still occupied, never returned to their pre war opulence. This mood of decay pervaded in the 1944 article, "Life Visits a Fading Newport,"

"...they stand in stately rows along Bellevue Avenue in Newport, RI, once 'the richest street in the world.' Since the passing of the Gilded Age that these house symbolize, two wars, a long depression, high income taxes and a shortage of servants have dimmed Newport's splendor. The doors of these villas will never be opened again."<sup>54</sup>

*Life Magazine* appeared to justify Henry James's 1906 prediction that the great houses, the "white elephants," would someday stand vast and blank. A new social order and modernist aesthetics had arrived in full force upon the scene. Financially, old structures were largely seen as economic burdens. Culturally, the historical revival styles and ornamental details of Newport's architectural legacy were viewed as manifestations of a decadent past representing a slavish admiration for social hierarchy and the privilege of the few. Modernity, with its emphasis on efficiency and minimalism, had no time for the picturesque effects so often celebrated in earlier decades.



Unknown Artist. *Providence Journal Bulletin*. 12 November 1951.

*The powerful appeal of urban renewal, modern architecture and superhighways is evident in this mid-20<sup>th</sup> century cartoon.*

<sup>54</sup> *Life Magazine*, "Life Visits a Fading Newport," 16 October 1944.

Decay and development spurred on two movements: historic preservation and urban renewal. Both had the same objective in mind, to save Newport. Both had different visions for what it meant to rescue the city and how it would be implemented. A group of concerned citizens formed The Preservation Society of Newport County in 1945 and Operation Clapboard in 1964. These private initiatives focused on the aesthetic and historic significance of individual buildings with the aim of preserving the 18<sup>th</sup> century quarter. The Newport Redevelopment Authority, established by the Representative Council in December of 1949, looked at the entire city, assessing both its physical assets and its economic and social challenges. These and many other organizations and citizens would participate in what can only be deemed both a dance and a boxing match. Sometimes they cooperated; oftentimes not. This situation repeated itself in numerous cities across the nation, where history and renewal worked at cross purposes.<sup>55</sup>

Clearance of districts identified as “slums” became one of the most controversial aspects of urban revitalization from the 1940s through the 1960s. Preservationists based their work on seeing the architectural significance and beauty beneath the decay of historic areas. The planners of urban renewal envisioned modern, light filled communities with improved traffic conditions and public services. There was no place for what they viewed as decrepit buildings. The debate between slum clearance and preservation in Newport played out in the local press throughout the 1950s. The *Newport Daily News* reported, “Slum Clearance Steps Suggested,” publishing the suggestions of the city planning technician, Albert Edwards, which “dealt chiefly with inadequate streets and congestion. He said there was good housing but most of it was old.”<sup>56</sup>



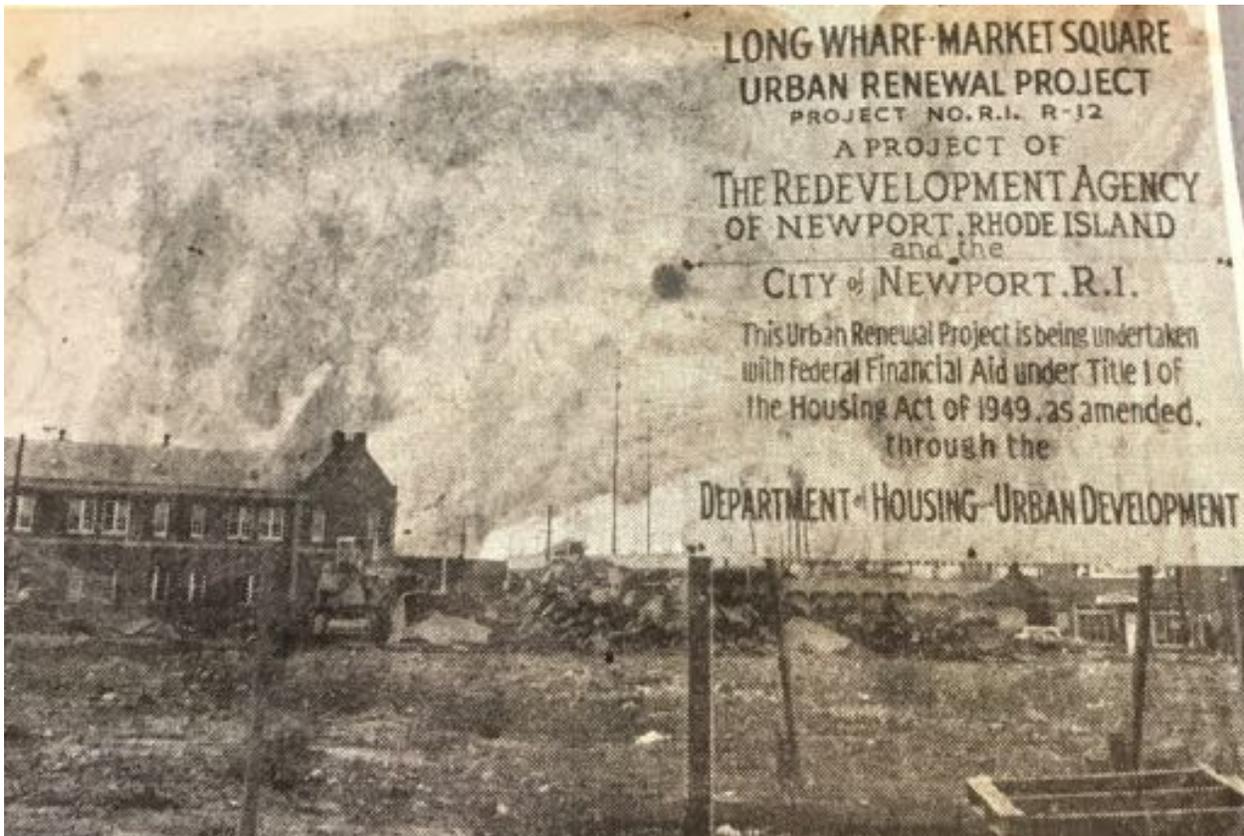
Artist Unknown. *Division Street*. Photograph, circa 1940. Photograph Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

*18<sup>th</sup> century houses were not appealing to many in the era of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century modernism.*

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<sup>55</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Random House, 1961). Jacobs’ book on the human and physical character of cities was seminal in inspiring the populist movement to curb the excesses of urban renewal.

<sup>56</sup> *Newport Daily News*, May 18, 1951



Artist Unknown. *Long Wharf and Market Square*. Photograph, 1966. *Providence Journal Bulletin*.

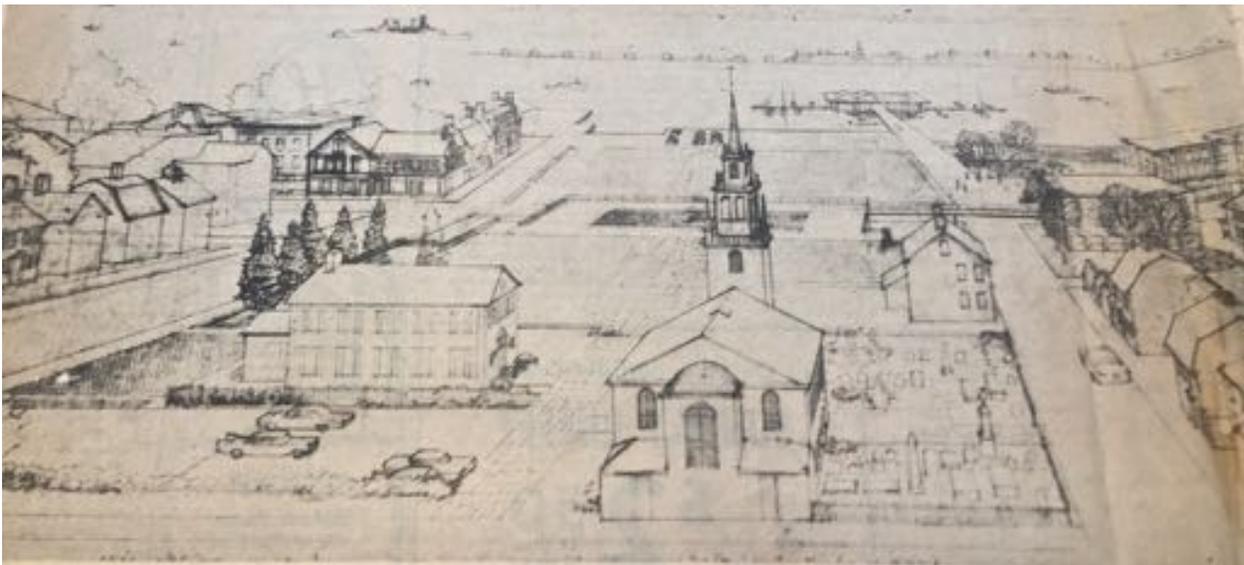
The Preservation Society of Newport County had different opinions of housing described as “old,” commissioning an inventory of historic structures by Antoinette Downing, who focused on the 18<sup>th</sup> century quarter, and Vincent J. Scully, Jr., working on 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture. Funded by the Van Beuren family, the study resulted in *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915* (1952), a landmark publication raising awareness of the city’s nationally significant buildings. Newport was found to have one of the largest collections of 18<sup>th</sup> century wooden houses in North America, 19<sup>th</sup> century Shingle Style architecture of exceptional quality and Beaux Arts summer houses by the nation’s leading architects. The appendix included a radical intervention for the restoration of Clarke Street, which proposed the demolition of all buildings after 1840. These later structures had filled in the once open gardens of the colonial era houses. Later additions to 18<sup>th</sup> century houses were also to be removed in order to restore the buildings to their original condition.<sup>57</sup> Although never implemented, the plan reflected the tendency by mid-20<sup>th</sup> century preservationists to value one era over another. Even historic preservationists did, at times, wish to knock things down.

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<sup>57</sup> Downing, pp 465-67.

The evolving nature of historic preservation and its change in focus from individual buildings to entire historic districts came to the forefront in the 1960s. Newport's preservationists focused on saving Colonial architecture in the 1940s and 1950s. In the early 1960s, they were forced to confront potential destruction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century city. Circumstances demanded a broader view of the city and all of its built heritage. In 1960, the Preservation Society commissioned a report from the firm of Tunnard & Harris to address wide ranging challenges to Newport's historic integrity. The final report reflected the latest philosophies on urban planning and preservation, reflecting back on Olmsted's *Improvement Plan* of 1913 and proposing even more far reaching preservation action.

"In preservation planning today, we must see beyond the boundaries of all Newport to include the great 19<sup>th</sup> century estates and the rocky coastline of the Island's tip. Times have changed since Olmsted could point to the 'ostentatious' side of Newport- a new generation sees these 'palaces' of the early captains of industry artifacts eminently worth saving...To preserve these as part of a plan for present day living, education and institutional uses almost as important as preservation planning is to the colonial seaport...the conservation of natural scenery is also vital. Olmsted's suggestions for Almy's Pond went unheeded; now the very coastline- Newport's incomparable rocky shore- is threatened by spot development."<sup>58</sup>



Tunnard & Harris. *Design for a park in front of Trinity Church*. Drawing, 1960.

*The planners proposed clearing the neighborhood around Trinity church to create an open space in front of the church affording a view to the harbor.*

Integrating landscape, buildings and urban planning in one harmonious preservation scheme was visionary, a testament to Tunnard & Harris's sensitivities to nature and human-made

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<sup>58</sup> Tunnard & Harris, *A Preservation Planning Report on Newport, Rhode Island*, January, 1960, p. 2.

structures. Their warnings were prophetic. Shortly after the completion of their report, a threat of grand proportions confronted Newport's gilded city. In 1962, The Elms (1901), one of the most opulent of Gilded Age estates famed for its architecture and elaborate gardens, went on the auction block. Purchased by a developer, the estate faced demolition to make way for possible commercial development in the heart of the residential Bellevue Avenue corridor. Preservationists and private citizens, alarmed at the situation, organized to save The Elms. Cleveland Amory wrote "The Battle for Modern Newport" in the *New York Times Magazine* at the height of the controversy, stating, "...Newport's Armageddon, in other words, had come. Whichever way The Elms blew, Newport was to follow."<sup>59</sup> Bulldozers and wrecking balls did not destroy The Elms, its thirteen acres of grounds or its magnificent 18<sup>th</sup> century French style stone and cast iron fence lining Bellevue Avenue. The Preservation Society acquired the estate in 1962 and opened it as a house museum, beginning a trend towards saving endangered 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century properties.

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<sup>59</sup> Cleveland Amory, "The Crucial Battle for Modern Newport," *The New York Times Magazine*, September 2, 1961.



Unknown Artist. *Aerial View of The Elms*. Photograph, circa 1945. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

The near destruction of The Elms prompted a major effort to establish a historic district ordinance. After three years of campaigning by the Preservation Society and other organizations, the city declared by ordinance in January of 1965 the creation of the Newport Historic District, encompassing the Historic Hill and Point, and a Historic District Commission for oversight.<sup>60</sup> Just as preservationists celebrated this victory, the greatest upheaval to the cityscape was about to take place. In February of 1965, the city council adopted an urban renewal plan developed by the Boston firm of Izadore, Candebub, Flessig & Adly Associates, which included a four lane highway along the waterfront that would come to be known as

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<sup>60</sup> Ordinance of the Council, No. 416 Chapter 149, 27 January 1965. City of Newport, Rhode Island. Also see, Holly Collins, "The Preservation Society of Newport County: The Founding Years, 1945-1965," (The Preservation Society of Newport County, 2006), pp. 44-47.

America's Cup Avenue.<sup>61</sup> Since the newly established Historic District did not include area from Thames Street east to the harbor, the land was open for redevelopment. Historic preservation and urban renewal now had to co-exist, neither being entirely triumphant.

In 1966, Newport received federal funding for urban redevelopment. The *Newport Daily News* stated, "the Newport area was marked principally by condemnation of property, demolition of buildings, digging up of streets, all conversely leading of an anticipated healthy and prosperous future."<sup>62</sup> Newspapers reported daily on the conflict between the large scale demolitions of urban planners and the preservationists call for protection of historic structures. Most of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial waterfront buildings from Long Wharf to the Perry Mill on Thames Street were cleared. One writer proclaimed, "Newport searched for reasons last week for the disappointment which had dropped on its waterfront redevelopment project with the force of a wrecking ball."<sup>63</sup> On the Point, historic groups urged that Marsh Street be used as the new access road to Goat Island rather than Bridge Street, with its rich collection of colonial houses. They were successful. Preservation prevailed.



Unknown Artist. *Bridge Street*. Photograph, circa 1965. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

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<sup>61</sup> "Council for the Renewal Plan." *Newport Daily News*, 24 February 1965.

<sup>62</sup> "1966: The Pace Quickens in Newport," *Newport Daily News*, 31 December 1966

<sup>63</sup> "Amid the Rubble, Newport Asks Why," *Providence Journal*, 21 April 1968.

The streetscapes of 18<sup>th</sup> century houses throughout the Hill and Point neighborhoods did present a remarkable preservation challenge and opportunity. These relatively compact buildings were not well suited for museum or commercial use and they were in areas of severe blight. The original Colonial era streets also presented problems as reported by Tunnard & Harris in 1960.

“The Colony House and Brick Market, coming after the plan was set, make a focal point for Washington Square, but a square in name only. Instead, the town’s important buildings are scattered, presently a most interesting urban scene, and, at the same time, a challenge to the ingenuity of those who are trying to preserve it...surroundings of commercial blight are the rule rather than the exception in Newport.”<sup>64</sup>

The use of the word “blight” had negative implications for it identified many vernacular 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings as acceptable for demolition when, in fact, they formed a significant urban core. Only landmark buildings and colonial period residences seemed worthy of preservation. The result of placing such a value system on what was to be preserved and the modernist emphasis on efficiency and access by automobile produced an environment where the original streetscapes were open to radical redesign. From 1966 to 1970, urban renewal produced the four lane highway known as America’s Cup Boulevard, caused the destruction of the west side of Thames Street from Long Wharf to Memorial Boulevard, the creation of Perrotti Park on the harbor, and the construction of new buildings on the wharves. The greatest change was the reorientation from the original east-west access of colonial side streets bringing pedestrians and traffic towards the harbor and wharves. Instead, America’s Cup Boulevard severed that historic link by its north-south orientation. In the same period of the late 1960s, much of the Colonial quarter was revitalized through historic preservation. These two often conflicting forces of urban renewal and preservation profoundly left their mark on the streets of Newport.

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<sup>64</sup> Tunnard and Harris, p. 2.



Unknown Artist. *Aerial View of Trinity Church*. Photograph, 1967. Courtesy of the City of Newport.

*The construction of America's Cup Avenue began in 1966 after demolition of buildings along the waterfront. The houses to the west of Trinity Church were moved in the late 1960s and early 1970s to make way for the creation of Queen Anne Square park by the Newport Restoration Foundation. The historic street to the left of Trinity Church disappeared to make way for the park.*

The construction of the Newport Bridge, from 1966 to 1969, also had a major impact on the city. The chairman of the Rhode Island Turnpike, Bridge Authority, Francis G. Dwyer, stated, "Newport's future is assured...it is in a position to compete with other areas in developing its tourist and recreation industry."<sup>65</sup> The Jamestown ferry ceased operation with the opening of the Newport Bridge, ending the hundreds of years of pedestrian traffic on the wharves. A bridge access road and major rotary bisected the northwestern area of the city. Progress prevailed in new roads, buildings and a new bridge, but the old still had its place. Brian Jones, who reported frequently on the entire redevelopment process, captured the battle between old and new as he wrote, "Newport's unique collection of old buildings, having survived the Revolutionary War, now appear to be outlasting the 20<sup>th</sup> century urge to tear them down."<sup>66</sup> Modern thoroughfares and historic buildings may have been at odds with one another, but they formed the basis of Newport's next incarnation as a place of major tourism, festivals and leisure pursuits. In its three centuries of development, Newport had never been so radically altered as in the late 1960s when it was directly linked to the mainland and a large portion of the waterfront demolished for redevelopment.



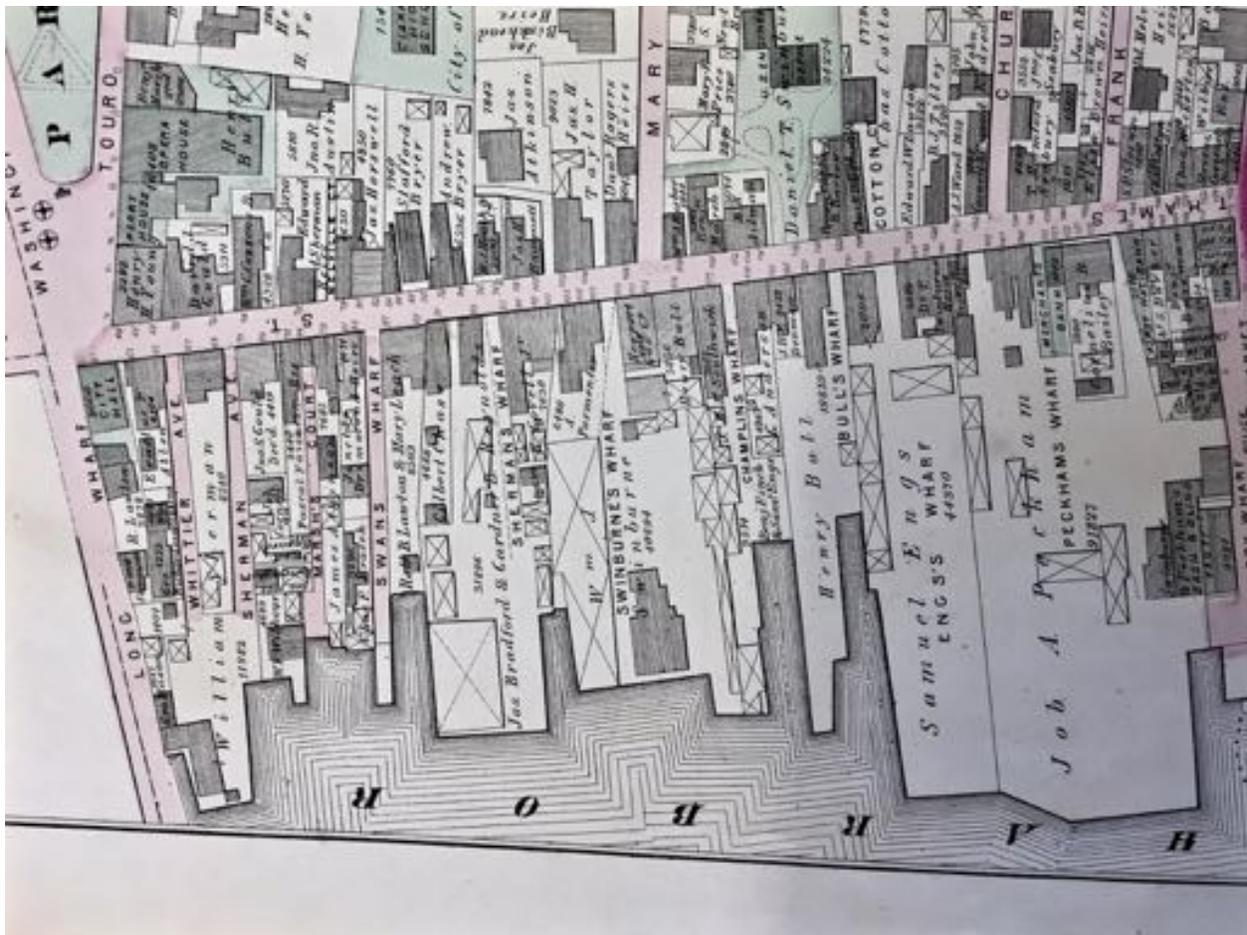
Meservey. *Thames Street and Wharves*. Photograph circa 1950. Courtesy of the Preservation Society of Newport County.

*The image depicts the waterfront area demolished in 1966 to make way for America's Cup Avenue. Houses, shops and warehouses of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries line the streets of this densely built up district. Long Wharf and the Point District are to the upper right of the photograph. Goat Island is in the distance.*

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<sup>65</sup> "Bridge is Dedicated, Open to Traffic," *Newport Daily News*, 28 June 1969.

<sup>66</sup> "Tide Turns for Historic Newport," *Providence Journal*, 31 March 1968.



Atlas of the City of Newport, 1876. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society. The entire zone west of Thames Street (bottom portion of the map), with the exception of the building listed as "City Hall" at the corner of Long Wharf, was demolished in 1966 to make way for America's Cup Avenue. The "City Hall" was the original Brick Market built by Peter Harrison in 1763. Perrotti Park replaced the working waterfront. The open green park extends from the former wharves of William Sherman (on the far left) to Henry Bull (right side of map).

JANUARY 24, 1966

# Agency to Seek City OK of Basic Renewal Plans Thursday

## Waterfront Project Public Hearing Set

By MICHAEL S. WILSON

The Housing Redevelopment Agency on Thursday will seek city approval of basic plans for the Long Wharf Market Square project.

A public hearing before the city council will be held Thursday to consider the proposed location of a new waterfront road, and a building pattern for the area.

If the preliminary plan is approved, the agency will forward the plan to the Federal Housing and Home Finance Agency in New York. With Federal acceptance of the outline, planning will proceed with the Massachusetts Dept. of Public Works at reconstructing the 10-acre project area, one of four adjacent areas scheduled for redevelopment.

The road is designed as part of a thoroughfare which would carry traffic in a loop from the city's downtown center, which through the First Baptist's railroad right-of-way and along 600 feet of the waterfront, turning inland to join with Thames Street at Canal Street. From 600, at Canal and Lewis Streets, the route would turn seaward, connecting with Memorial Boulevard.

In the project area, which extends from West Washington Street to Market Square, the existing road is a barrier separating the three adjacent land-use areas proposed by the redevelopment agency.

One of these is the 10-acre area along the waterfront, which would be used as a public promenade.

The two larger areas, to north and south of the road's route, would be used as "general business commercial." The other portion, east to the water, would be "exclusive residential." One area therefore would be limited primarily to retail, office and service establishments while the other would be used for low-rise, multiple, and apartment housing facilities.

The Thursday hearing will be concerned with the fundamental land use and highway proposals, and will include preliminary architectural designs, which will be prepared in more detail at a later stage of the project.

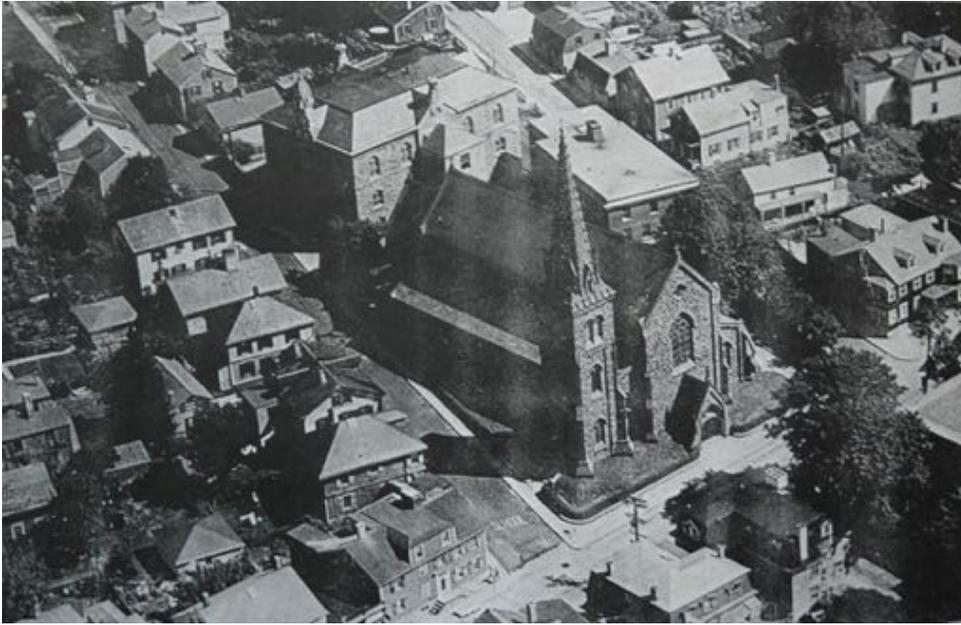
## Dispute Goes On Over Primary Aims

Plans for the waterfront project, which are at the preliminary stage, have received a preliminary approval from the city council.



Proposed redevelopment project for the Long Wharf Market Square area of Newport is shown by dotted line. White line indicates new 'thoroughfare' road.

Artist Unknown. Aerial View of Thames Street. Photograph, 1965. Providence Sunday Journal. Outlined in a black and white dotted line is the waterfront area designated for demolition to make way for the construction of America's Cup Boulevard indicated in white. Demolition began in 1966.



Artist Unknown. *Aerial View of St. Mary's Church on Spring Street.* Photograph, 1950. Providence Journal Bulletin.

*The houses along Levin Street, to the left of the church, were demolished during the creation of the two lane Memorial Boulevard in the 1960s.*



*Atlas of the City of Newport, 1907. Courtesy of the Preservation Society of Newport County. Houses on the north side of Levin Street, above St. Mary's Church on the left side of the map, were demolished in the mid-1960s to create the four lane Memorial Boulevard, which continued eastward, incorporating Bath Road, seen in the lower right corner of the map. The new Memorial Boulevard connected America's Cup Avenue on the waterfront with Easton's Beach.*

## THE LANDMARK CITY: 1965 TO TODAY

The story of Newport since the establishment of the Historic District in 1965 encompasses the increase in the number of private house restorations, the opening of historic sites to the public and the movement to safeguard the city's centuries old tree canopy. History and preservation appear to be triumphant. Will history continue to determine the future in a place so revered for its storied past and nationally important architectural heritage? What period, if any, should be assigned the greatest significance and attention? Preservation, like urban renewal, also has its own prejudices. The colonial town had been celebrated since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and the focus of attention during mid-20<sup>th</sup> century preservation efforts, but the Victorian and Gilded Age districts were also of importance and finally came to the fore in the late 1960s after serious threats of destruction. Preservation did prevail. Newport celebrated its acknowledged position as a treasury of landmark buildings, landmark districts, a Tree City USA and an arboretum. History, heritage and horticulture pervade the place. To possess a compelling heritage is a gift to most cities, but, beware, for it can also be a prison. The best physical assets should certainly be maintained, however, nothing can remain static. Being frozen in time does no good. Some ages are heroic and define a city, but one cannot value only a much heralded age. The entire length and breadth of a city is best remembered and valued.

The articulation of what constituted a significant heritage and approaches to its maintenance formed the core of the *Historic Hill Urban Renewal Project Survey and Report* of 1970. Antoinette Downing, Chairman of the Rhode Island Historical and Preservation Commission, served as editor with a group of historians and planners. As the team assessed the district, their findings reflected a new approach to historic areas.

“An interest in preserving not only single buildings but the total environment has increased, the impracticality of transforming cities into museum towns has become increasingly apparent...the arbitrary designation of architectural and historic value to a specific period has been increasingly challenged and programs planned to restore an entire city to a single period (Williamsburg) cannot for contemporary concepts be justified. Removal of all later buildings falsifies history, freezing the town into a museum atmosphere and destroying the story of its evolving development...”<sup>67</sup>

The report emphasized the importance of viewing Newport not only as a collection of a few important historic structures, but as an entire urban entity with many complex layers of streetscapes. Thornton Wilder's romantic view of Newport's nine cities did not exist only in fiction but became a reality recognized by preservationists. During the course of the 1960s and 1970s, many of those neighborhoods immortalized as the “nine cities” in *Theophilus North*

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<sup>67</sup> *Architectural Quality and History of the Buildings of the Historic Hill Urban Renewal Project, Newport, RI*. Oct 1970. Prepared for the Redevelopment Agency of Newport under contract with Oldport Association Inc., Antoinette Downing, editor, Dr. Osmund R. Overby, Project Supervisor, HABS, Newport Projects 1968 & 70 and Bradford E. Southworth, Supervising Planner, RI Statewide Planning Program. pp. 2-4.

became officially sanctioned historic districts. In 1976, further recognition came with the National Park Service designation of the Newport Historic District, the Bellevue Avenue- Ochre Point Cliffs District, and the Ocean Drive District as National Historic Landmark Districts.<sup>68</sup> History now loomed large in most corners of the city. Heritage tourism became big business and preserved streetscapes, from an intimate colonial era lane to a leafy Victorian boulevard, were highly valued assets. Historic atmosphere was a highly prized commodity but how were past and present to be reconciled with the future? Would Newport only function as a museum city?



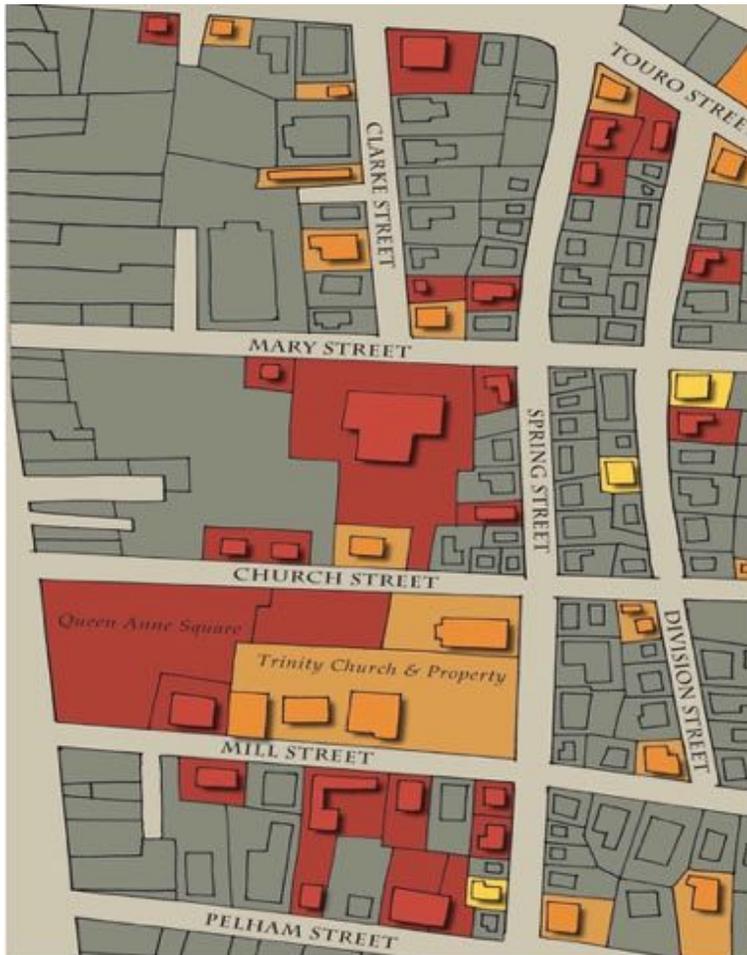
John Tschirch. *Spring Street*. Photograph, 2016.

The question of whether to turn Newport into a museum city or to promote its use as a living entity was given impetus in 1968 when Doris Duke created the Newport Restoration Foundation, dedicated to saving the colonial streetscapes one house and one block at a time. Doris Duke did not have a vision of Newport as another model historic city like Colonial Williamsburg with all buildings owned by one organization. She viewed Newport as a viable community of independent residences with the Newport Restoration Foundation serving as a catalyst for action. Identifying key 18<sup>th</sup> buildings in terms of both their history and location, the Foundation restored the structures and leased them to tenants while retaining control of the fabric and appearance of the facades. The restoration of one or two buildings on a block by the Foundation spurred restoration of nearby structures by private individuals. Eventually, over

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<sup>68</sup> National Register Designations and National Historic Landmark Designations, with updates, from 1968 to 2008 are on deposit at the Rhode Island Historical and Preservation Commission and the National Park Service.

eighty-five colonial houses were acquired and restored, maintaining the historic character of the streetscapes.



Schematic rendering of the Historic Hill, circa 2010. Courtesy of the Newport Restoration Foundation.

*This rendering illustrates the impact of the Newport Restoration Foundation's use of individual building preservation as a catalyst for the revitalization of a whole district. The areas in red are properties owned and improved by the Newport Restoration Foundation from the 1960s to the present. The buildings in orange are properties restored by private owners. Doris Duke created Queen Anne Square, moving historic buildings and imposing an open green space on what had historically been a densely built up neighborhood.*



*A Winter Evening in Newport*

Ilse Buchert Nesbitt. *A Winter Evening in Newport*. Woodblock, 2016. Courtesy of Ilse Buchert Nesbitt.

*The massing and texture of 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings and streetscapes still inspire Ilse Buchert Nesbitt, who has lived and worked as an artist in Newport since the mid-1960s.*

Except for the demolition of the waterfront for America's Cup Boulevard and the destruction of Levin Street for Memorial Boulevard, Newport remained historically intact. Buildings ranging from the 18<sup>th</sup> through early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries continued to be restored as private residences and many house museums were added to the roster of visitor attractions. Heritage tourism became big business as the past appeared to be the foundation for a prosperous present and future. Then, in 1974, one of the most poignant meetings of the present and future interacting with the past occurred with the citywide art exhibition *Monumenta*. Reflective, sublime, confrontational, the exhibit offered works of art and a variety of moods and settings as monumental modernist sculpture appeared throughout Newport. History could no longer be assumed to solely reign in its streets. Nothing should be taken for granted, not the past, present or the future. This spirit, in part, guided the organizers of *Monumenta*, as expressed in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue.

"Newport is quite properly celebrated both for its scenic beauty and for its unique ensemble of architectural monuments, the numerous colonial houses and great mansions which dot the landscape and provide visible testimony to a rich and enduring cultural heritage. The sense of an elegant past weighs heavily on the town, and its dedicated preservation groups have gone to considerable trouble to make the historic past accessible, and, in fact to keep it slickly groomed. Thus, the bald confrontation between this noble repository of formal New England culture and fifty uncompromising, large-scale sculptures, stamped with the look of the industrial age, might be expected to generate certain environmental tensions...The most pretentious scheme of civilized values must be flexible enough to entertain and absorb new esthetic truths, or go the way of the dinosaur in cultural history. *Monumenta* dramatizes the interaction of past and present in a dialogue of sculpture and natural or architectural sites."<sup>69</sup>

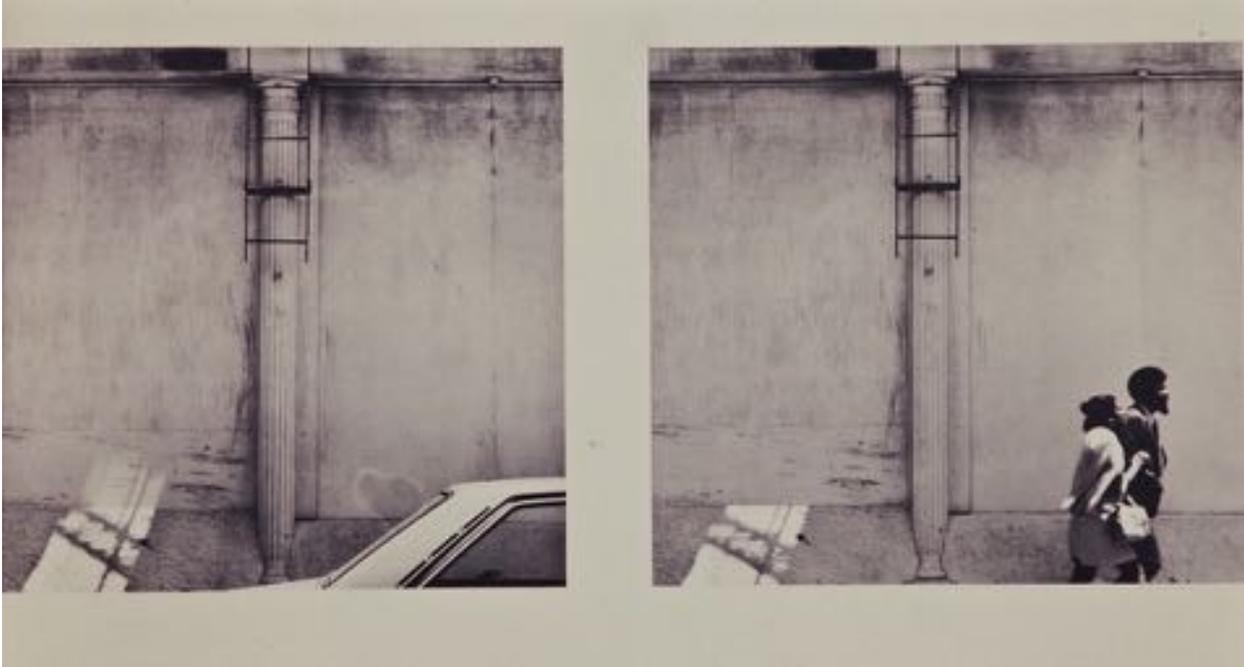
Conceived of as a work of art in itself, and as an ideal historic foil for modern sculpture, Newport's streets and shores played host to the prominent artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, among them Alexander Calder, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Louise Nevelson and Claes Oldenburg and Barnett Newman. Christo wrapped the Cove at King's Beach in nylon sailcloth, transforming the shoreline into an art form using place as its key component. Aaron Siskind's photographs capture the fleeting moments of street life against the fixed always present backdrop of Thames Street's buildings, a combination of picturesque charm, faded glory and modern grit. Siskind brought a sensibility to the setting that played between the past and present, as stated in the *Monumenta* exhibiton catalogue.

"Aaron Siskind's photographic essay on Newport as an environment also establishes connections with the innovative artistic past...Siskind's image sequence of Newport life pits the mobility of the street against his familiar, imperturbable wall and an isolated pilaster, half-buried in flaking plaster, timeless witnesses to the action which passes before them."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Sam Hunter, ed., *Monumenta*, (Newport: Monumenta Inc., 1974), p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.



Aaron Siskind (1903-1991). *Images of Thames Street*. Photographs, 1974.  
*Excerpt from the exhibition catalogue Monumenta, 1974.*

The city as work of art, as a place evoking various moods, as backdrop of the human condition. These are the components of Siskind's Newport photographs, a richly layered entity where beauty, age and decay live side by side, as in the nine cities delineated by Thornton Wilder in *Theophilus North*. These are the indefinable qualities of Newport's streets, beyond the paving stones, the sidewalks, the fine old buildings, the overhanging trees and sea views. All of these features, both tangible and intangible, make up the city that has been a cultural touchstone since its inception.

Debate continues about what Newport should be, how it should look and where it should venture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Discussion of traffic management, street signage, the presentation of Washington Square and the re-imagining of the historic spring site at the intersection of Spring and Touro Streets express residents concerns for the appearance and physical cohesion of the city. The natural features of the cityscape are also of interest to community focused organizations, such as The Newport Tree Society, founded in 1987, which is dedicated to preserving and propagating the urban forest. Its work harkens back to Olmsted's 1913 *Improvement Plan* to incorporate nature as a critical feature of Newport's historic beauty and present day healthful climate. In 2010, The Newport Tree Society established The Newport Arboretum, a citizen centered model of tree regeneration in a city where most of the urban forest resides on private land. The Aquidneck Island Land Trust, organized in 1990, works in open space conservation to maintain the natural character and livability of Newport and its environs. Landscape, buildings, roads and development all feature in this ongoing debate about the past, present and future in Newport. There is always a new initiative, such as Taylor & Partners "Plan 2004," which revisited the issues created by America's Cup Avenue by proclaiming, "It sliced north-south along the waterfront, its 98 foot width amputating the city

functionally, visually and psychologically from the harbor that gave it birth.”<sup>71</sup> Thus, both action and conversation on Newport’s urban identity continues.

Newport in 2016 is a repository of history, legends and lore where the dramatic topography of rocky shore, coves and vast sea remain omnipresent and buildings and streets still offer an architectural pageant of times past. For many, the reality of an historically intact streetscape inspired one’s daydreams. Ideas are anchored in Newport’s buildings and streets from the religious freedom and entrepreneurship of the Colonial period and the picturesque sentiments and technological advancements of the Victorian era to the imperial aspirations of the Gilded Age and the Modernist hopes and preservationist victories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through all of these ages, Newport became an accidental work of urban art. Many forces drove the formation of the city, some incidental, some by design. The sum is the total of the parts. It remains a place of memory, to be preserved, enriched, interpreted and, most importantly and with difficulty, must be allowed to evolve for it is a cultural touchstone where ideas become real, where dreams are sought and fought over along its shores, in its buildings and on its streets.



John Tschirch. *View of the Colony House from Barney Street*. Photograph, 2016.  
*Over 350 years of urban history in one street: a colonial era thoroughfare lined with 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings, a 20<sup>th</sup> century gas station on the site of the spring where 17<sup>th</sup> century settlers built their houses and an architectural landmark in the Colony House.*

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<sup>71</sup> Taylor & Partners. “Plan 2004-Urban Design for Central Newport,” 2004.

## THE HISTORIC CHARACTER OF NEWPORT'S STREETS: A SYNOPSIS

Urban planning principles and building technologies of various periods are made manifest in Newport's streetscapes. Below are a series of photographs taken by a group of volunteer artists in the summer and fall of 2016.

### THAMES STREET



Katrina Benner. *Thames Street*. Photograph, 2016.

*Square and rectangular buildings, set directly on the street, with flat facades marked only by window frames and door lintels characterize the appearance of the northern section of Thames Street. These houses reflect colonial era post and beam construction methods, resulting in rectilinear shapes. Door frames are inspired by the classical motifs of columns and triangular pediments, as seen in the building to the left, as framing elements for doorways. Garden plots originally separated the colonial era properties, which were subdivided and developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The structure to the right of the tan colored house is an example of infill during the early 1800s.*

## THE POINT



Tan-ya Muldoon. *Third Street*. Photograph, 2016.

*Planned in grid fashion, the Point illustrates the rational order prized by the Society of Friends, who laid out the district in the early 1700s. Intimate in scale, the Point is a quiet neighborhood of mixed use dwellings, from single houses to apartments. The once open colonial era gardens were eventually filled in with additional buildings during the Victorian age as the Old Colony railroad ran through the center of the district, bringing industrial technology and more workers and residents to the Point.*

## HISTORIC HILL



John Tschirch. *Mount Vernon Street*. Photograph, 2016.

A diverse range of building types and styles appears throughout the Historic Hill, a meeting place between the colonial town and the 19<sup>th</sup> century districts that appeared on the crest of the hill. The house dates to the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the typical flat façade and a door framed by classical half columns and topped by a triangular pediment. The yellow house to its right is mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Second Empire French in style with a Mansard roof. It was remodeled in the 1880s with patterned shingles, brackets and a bay window in the Queen Anne Revival style. The next house (third from the left) is 18<sup>th</sup> century followed by a Queen Anne Revival style building with a steep gable and bay windows. With centuries of architectural development, the resulting streetscape is complex composition of forms reflecting the 19<sup>th</sup> century Interest in architectural variety and the ability of Industrial technology to make diverse building shapes affordable and attainable

## SPRING STREET



Chad Lubertowicz. *Spring Street*. Photograph, 2016.  
*The original 18<sup>th</sup> century street is lined with early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings to the right and Trinity Church (1726) to the left of the photo. Spring Street is a combination of both colonial, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.*

## WASHINGTON SQUARE



John Tschirch. *View of Washington Square to Long Wharf*. Photograph, 2016.

*Washington Square is a story of urban evolution. The area was not a formally designed urban space, but began as a parade ground for local militia. To the right of the photo is the park which once served as the parade ground for troops. By the early 1760s, the area took its present form as a grand civic space with the completion of the Brick Market (1762), seen in the distance. To the right of the Brick Market building is Long Wharf Mall, which served as a thoroughfare from the 1680s until urban renewal of the late 1960s, when it was converted into a pedestrian zone.*

## LOWER THAMES STREET



John Tschirch. *Lower Thames Street at the intersection of Fountain Street*. Photograph, 2016. *Thames Street runs for over a mile parallel to the waterfront. The southern portion of Thames Street experienced increased development during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as immigrant groups, a majority of them from Ireland, settled in the area. Although there are extant 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings in the district, the streetscapes are primarily defined Victorian houses, many with front porches. Gabled roofs and porches create an atmosphere open to the street.*

## LOWER THAMES STREET AND THE WATERFRONT



John Tschirch. *Howard Court*. Photograph, 2016.

*The street, marked by mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian houses, retains the original 18<sup>th</sup> century plan of thoroughfares terminating in commercial wharves. This model of urban design defined the entire waterfront until the mid-1960s when urban development resulted in the reorientation of streets from Long Wharf to Memorial Boulevard. The original 18<sup>th</sup> century pattern of side streets terminating in wharves remains intact from Memorial Boulevard to Wellington Square.*

*BELLEVUE AVENUE*



John Tschirch. *Chateau-sur-Mer*. Photograph, 2016.

*Famed for its summer villas, Bellevue Avenue is characterized by walls, gates and fences. Chateau-sur-Mer (1852) illustrates the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century fashion for low walls revealing lush landscapes of trees. .*



Nick Belong. *Gates of The Elms*. Photograph, 2016.

*The Elms, completed in 1901, has elaborate Neo-classical stone gateposts and iron grillework. Modeled after an 18<sup>th</sup> century French chateaux, The Elms introduced classical grandeur and a definitive architectural presence to Bellevue Avenue. The combination of monumental stonework and abundant greenery created the luxuriant streetscape of Gilded Age Bellevue Avenue from 1890 to 1914.*

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