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NAME: Ocean Road Historic District

LOCATION: Portions of Ocean and Wildfield Farm Roads, and Hazard and
Newton Avenues

OWNER: Multiple -- see owners list

CONDITION: Excellent to good; unaltered and altered; original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Ocean Road Historic District is characterized by a significant concentration of high-quality Shingle Style structures that display the variety possible within the style. With several Early 20th century houses, these buildings compose a well-maintained, turn of the century residential area important in the social and architectural development of Narragansett Pier. Ocean Road runs south from the most densely settled area of Narragansett Pier along the dramatic rocky shoreline of the Atlantic Ocean. Between the road (lined by stone walls and heavy vegetation) and the water is a strip of land where houses more ostentatious than the average Pier cottages were built by wealthy summer residents. The Ocean Road Historic District includes about 45 residences, some of which are former carriage houses, scattered along the shoreline on a half-mile segment of Ocean Road and three short intersecting streets, Newton and Hazard Avenues, and Wildfield Farm Road. Most of the residences date from 1882 (when Ocean Road was opened) to the mid-1890s, by which time a majority of the prime lots had been occupied. An exception is Hazard's Castle west of Ocean Road, an eclectic stone dwelling begun in 1846 with a 105-foot, square, stone tower added in the 1880s.

The area covered by the Ocean Road Historic District was originally part of Seaside Farm, the estate of the wealthy and eccentric mystic Joseph Peace Hazard. In the 1840s Hazard began construction of a house that has become known as Hazard's Castle, a stone structure supposedly modeled after an abbey he had seen in England. Hazard spent a good deal of time abroad which slowed progress on the building's construction; the tower, built of stone from a quarry on his property and designed to assist communication with the spirit world, was erected in the early 1880s. The building, now maintained as a retreat house by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence, has been altered several times: once by application of Tudor style detailing in the early twentieth century (a change not entirely out of keeping with the building's original appearance), and more recently (and less sympathetically) by the addition of a large brick wing to the south.

The Castle and its prominent tower are unique architectural elements within the district. Hazard's influence on the area's appearance,

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though, is more pervasive. He disproved the common assumption that sea winds prohibited the growth of trees at the Pier by bringing saplings back from his travels and planting them, producing the thick woods that borders parts of Ocean Road today. Even more important were a stipulation prohibiting commercial use of the land and the provision for a public walkway along the bluff at the edge of the ocean that he included with deeds when he sold lots along the shore in the 1860s. The area was thus protected from an invasion of hotels, and a residential district was insured.

Ocean Road was laid out as a public way in 1882, and by 1884 had been macadamized from the Narragansett Casino to a point south of the district. Prior to this time the few residences along the shore, such as the simple cottages at 5 and 15 Hazard Avenue (both built in the 1860s and much altered in the 1880s), were reached by a road through the Hazard estate. The new road connecting Narragansett Pier and Point Judith made the very desirable oceanfront sites more accessible, generating much construction in the late 1880s. The road and commodious houses, like the Narragansett Casino of the same period, were prompted by--and in turn stimulated--the more formal and expensive lifestyle that began to dominate the Pier as its popularity increased.

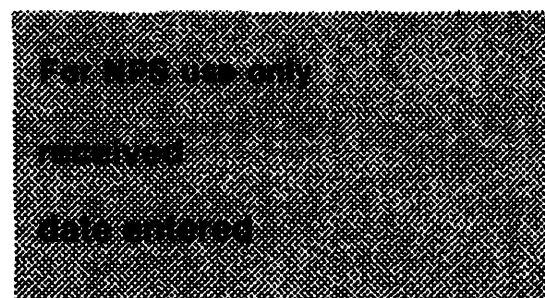
Several houses along Ocean Road were designed by nationally known architects. McKim, Mead and White were responsible for Gillian Lodge (416 Ocean Road) and Stone Lea (55 Newton Avenue); Stone Croft (362 Ocean Road) and Rockhurst (300 Ocean Road) were the work of William Gibbons Preston of Boston. All but Rockhurst used the Shingle Style, a popular choice for buildings by less prominent architects as well. Different detailing produced an interesting variety among the Shingle Style buildings. Diagonal wooden strips in the gables of Over Cliff (352 Ocean Road) imitate Tudor Fachwerk; Turnberry (366 Ocean Road), Rose Lea (410 Ocean Road), and Sea Meadow (11 Newton Avenue) feature gambrel roofs, Palladian windows and other Colonial Revival elements. Wildfield Farm (25 Wildfield Farm Road) with its stone chimneys, small-paned windows, and complex massing is a lively cross of the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles. Similarly, Rockhurst combines the Queen Anne and Shingle styles.

Most of the residences stand on dramatic sites overlooking the rocky shoreline and are oriented to the ocean. They are thus at some distance from the road and are often partially hidden by bushes and trees. Subsidiary structures, however, edge the roadway, their design usually related to the residence they serve. Over Cliff's carriage house has a picturesque two-story tower; Turnberry's is covered by a broad gambrel roof. A handsome stone and shingle carriage house with a conical tower at 380 Ocean Road is the only surviving trace of the Suwanee estate, a large open space between the road and water indicating the site of the demolished villa.

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Several twentieth-century structures in or adjacent to the district complement the area's late nineteenth-century residential character. Turnberry, although built in 1910-11, is very similar to residences around it dating from a decade or two earlier. More distinguishable as a later structure is the small house at 375 Ocean Road built in the 1920s by James C. Potter of Pawtucket, who owned Turnberry (directly across the street) at the same time. The varied fenestration, irregular roofline, and assortment of wall surfaces featured in the design of the Potter House give it a studied quaintness that, although different, harmonizes with the Shingle Style buildings in the vicinity. The handsome Dutch Colonial style houses at 290, 445, and 460 Ocean Road and the stuccoed Mediterranean villa style house with red tile roof at 449 Ocean Road also contribute to the visual quality and architectural richness of the district. Other modern buildings are more intrusive, although the scale and simple design of houses along the south side of Newton Avenue and at 364 Ocean Road diminish the impact of their presence. The district boundaries skirt a section west of Ocean Road between Potter House and Gillian Lodge to avoid a modern boxy house which, fortunately, is far enough removed from Ocean Road to cause little visual disruption.

INVENTORY:

Contributing structures are defined as those built during or prior to Narragansett Pier's period of national prominence as a summer resort colony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as later structures that in scale, massing, and materials do not detract from the turn-of-the-century built environment. All buildings are of frame construction unless otherwise indicated.

Contributing Structures

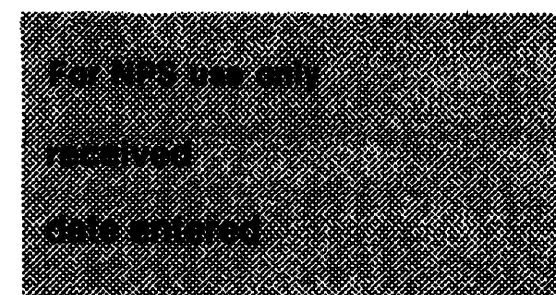
Hazard Avenue

- 4 Indian Rock/Reverend William Babcock House (ca. 1880-1890): A 2½-story, gable-roofed dwelling with hip-roofed ell at the rear. It faces the Atlantic Ocean and has gabled dormers breaking through the eaves, a veranda overlooking the water, and a roofed balcony at the 2nd-floor level on the north side. It was originally owned by the Reverend William Babcock.
- 5 Flat Rock/Reverend Francis Wharton House (1860s, 1880s): A 2½-story, gable-roofed dwelling with a veranda and a balcony at the 3rd-floor level with Stick Style trusswork and "Swiss chalet" jigsaw ornament. The house appears to have been built in the late 1860s and remodeled later, possibly during the 1880s. It

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was built for the Reverend Francis Wharton, a prominent Philadelphia attorney who later became an Episcopal priest. He was a professor at the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from 1871 to 1881, and served as chief of the legal division of the United States State Department from 1885 until his death in 1889.

- 15 Grove Cottage (1860s, 1880s): A 2½-story, gable-roofed dwelling with 1½-story, gable-roofed ell on the west side. Part of this house appears to date from the late 1860s; the rest, on the water side, was either altered or added in the 1880s to complement the other structures then being built along the newly opened Ocean Road. It was owned by the Reverend Francis Wharton and was occupied as a summer home by A.C. Dunham, Esquire, of Hartford.
- 70 Hazard's Castle (1846-1849, 1884): A large, rambling, 2½-story, gable-roofed stone dwelling with gable-roofed ells, conical-roofed polygonal towers, and a 105-foot, square, stone tower with battered walls and a battlemented parapet. The building was begun in 1846 as the main house for Joseph Peace Hazard's Seaside Farm and was supposedly modeled after an abbey which Hazard had seen in England. The tall tower, an important local landmark, is dedicated to the memory of Hazard's ancestors and was completed in 1884. Hazard was a spiritualist and originally planned the tower as a platform from which he could more easily communicate with the spirit world. Hazard's Castle was apparently altered in the early 20th century by the addition of some Tudor style elements. The structure, currently maintained as a retreat house by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence, has had a large, 2-story, flat-roofed brick wing added to the south side.

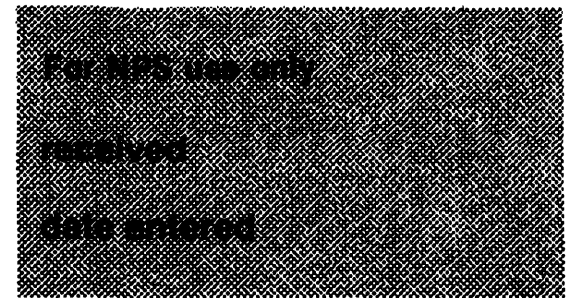
Newton Avenue

- 11 Sea Meadow/James W. Cooke House (1885-86): A 2½-story, cross-gambrel-roofed dwelling with some Colonial Revival detailing, built for James W. Cooke of Philadelphia.
- 30 Residence (ca. 1910): Two 1½-story, shingled, gambrel-roofed structures connected by a 1-story enclosed passage. Gambrel-roofed dormers look seaward.
- 35 Residence (ca. 1910): A 1½-story, shingled, gambrel-roofed structure, perhaps once a caretaker's house for #30.

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Newton Avenue (cont)

- 55 • Stone Lea/George V. Cresson House (1883-84): A large, 2½-story, stone and wood-frame Shingle Style dwelling with a flared hipped-gable roof, gable and hip-roofed wings to the west, and a glazed veranda facing the ocean. The house, designed for George V. Cresson of Philadelphia by McKim, Mead and White, was extensively altered in the 1940s. A carriage house with a dome-roofed octagonal tower also stands on the property.
- 59 Reverend W.W. Newton House (c. 1885): This 2½-story, shingled building, erected by Reverend W.W. Newton of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, has a gable roof enlivened by gable-roofed dormers and pavilions. A Tuscan-columned veranda overlooking the ocean has been enclosed. A handsome wrought iron gate guards the entrance to the property.

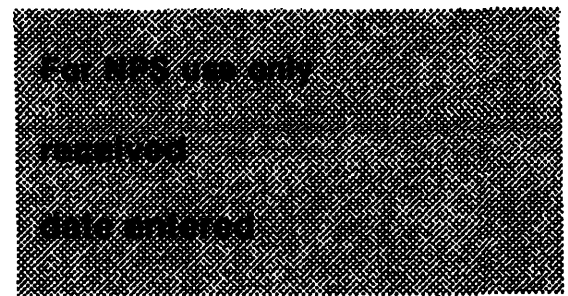
Ocean Road

- 290 • This 2½-story, gambrel-roofed, Dutch Colonial style house (c. 1920) is sided in stone on the first story and shingle on the second story. A central gable-roofed 2-story stone and shingle porte cochère projects from the center of the west facade and open 1-story porches with concrete columns flank either end. Tall, wrought-iron gates mark the roadside entrance to the circular front drive and a contemporaneous garage stands northwest of the house.
- 258 Carriage House for Rockhurst / Howard Lapsley House. A 1½-story, shingled structure with irregular massing, hip and pent roofs, and a cupola ventilator much remodelled and now used as rental residential property.
- 300 Rockhurst / Howard Lapsley House (c. 1880-1890) William Gibbons Preston of Boston, architect: This 2½-story house with complex massing, gable roofs, and ocean-side veranda, was originally a very distinguished Queen Anne style design. It was "modernized" with contemporary board and batten wall cover in 1976. Some gable trim remains. Howard Lapsley was a prominent New York broker and among the earliest to summer at the Pier. Rockhurst was moved south from its original location in the early 1920s to permit construction of the house now at 290 Ocean Road.
- 312 Finisterre (1886-87): This tall, narrow house with a gable roof and gable-roofed ell to the west was probably built by the Reverend Francis Wharton, who owned several adjacent properties. Facing the ocean is a 2-story extension which has a flat roof serving as a terrace. Near the road is a modest shingled garage.

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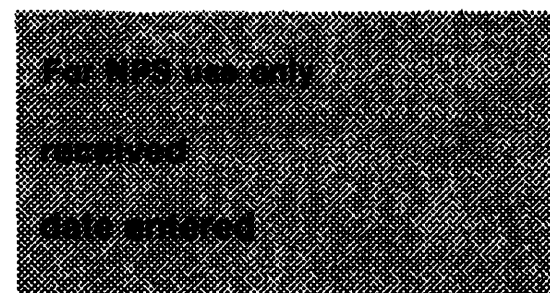
Ocean Road (cont)

- 340 Frank B. Grant House (between 1882 and 1890): A long, 2½-story, gable-roofed structure with an off-center gabled entrance pavilion, a Tuscan portico with Chinese Chippendale roof balustrade, and a 2-story semihexagonal bay on the road facade. The house was probably built for Frank B. Grant who sold it to W.D. Davis in 1890.
- 350 Fair Lawn/Jeffrey Davis and Charles H. Pope House (1884-85): A 2½-story, gable-roofed, Shingle Style double cottage dwelling with a gable-roofed ell and a cross-gabled wing on the west side. Built for Jeffrey Davis of Providence and Charles H. Pope of New York, it has Queen Anne windows, some staggered-butt shingle work, and a 2-story semicircular bay with semiconical roof. Davis was the son of William D. Davis, a textile manufacturer who owned, at various times, the Centerville Mill in West Warwick, Rhode Island, the Uxbridge Mill in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, and part interest in the Lippitt Mill in West Warwick. Jeffrey was made treasurer of the Lippitt Mill company and later became treasurer and president of the Quidnick Manufacturing Company.
- 352 Over Cliff/Charles H. Pope House (1884-85): A 2½-story, gable-roofed, Shingle Style dwelling built for Charles H. Pope. It has a rear ell with an M-shaped roof, decorative half-timbering in the gables, and a Shingle Style porte cochère on the west. There is also a handsome shingled carriage house with a slender, 2-story, bell-roofed tower standing on the property beside Ocean Road. Pope was a Providence native who was the chief partner of C.H. Pope & Co., a New York cotton brokerage.
- 356 • Residence (ca. 1910): This long, 1½-story building has a broad, deeply recessed doorway flanked by Tuscan columns. Fieldstone chimneys pierce the gambrel roof. The building is now owned by the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and called Grace Haven.
- 362 Stone Croft/Francis H. Dewey House (1890-91): A 2½-story, gable-roofed, Shingle Style dwelling, with a veranda and a 3rd-story balcony overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, and a 3-story semi-circular bay with a semi-conical roof. It was designed by William Gibbons Preston of Boston for Francis H. Dewey, a lawyer from Worcester, Massachusetts.
- 366 Turnberry/Emma R. Sinnickson House (1910-11): A large 2½-story Colonial Revival dwelling set on the cliffs overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. It has a gambrel roof, gambrel-roofed pavilions with Palladian windows at the attic level, and a glazed conservatory flanked by a Tuscan-columned veranda on the sea front.

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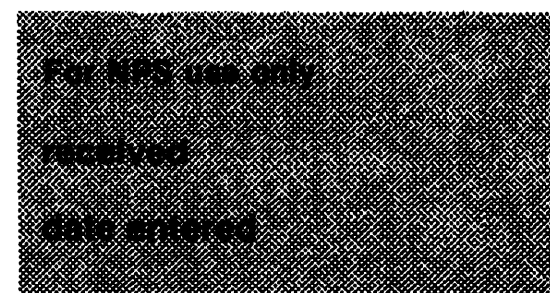
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Ocean Road (cont)

It was built for Emma R. Sinnickson of Philadelphia.

- 370 . Turnberry Carriage House (1910-11): A low, 2½-story, Colonial Revival structure with a massive gambrel roof and a pilastered stone chimney. It is set on a well landscaped lot behind a granite wall with tall gate-posts and it is now used as a residence.
- 375 . James C. Potter House (ca. 1920-25): A picturesque, 1½-story, hip-roofed dwelling with jerkin-head-roofed and gable-roofed ells and a combination of stone, shingle, and flush-board wall cover. There is a large semicircular picture window at the center of the facade on the first floor. It was built for James C. Potter of Pawtucket, who at the time owned the Turnberry property across the street.
- 380 . Suwanee Villa Carriage House (ca. 1889): A handsome, 1½-story, hip-roofed, stone and wood-frame, Shingle Style structure with rock-faced masonry, a 2-story, conical-roofed cylindrical tower, a sculptured terracotta chimney pot, and some cut-shingle wall cover. It was part of an estate designed by James H. Taft for David Stevenson of New York. The main house has been torn down, leaving the carriage house as the only surviving remnant of this estate. The building is currently used as a residence.
- 404 Residence (ca. 1900): This is actually two adjacent buildings connected by a short passage. One is a small 1½-story, gambrel-roofed building, its similarity to #410 indicating that it was probably built as a subsidiary structure for Rose Lea. The ridge of the other building's gable roof is perpendicular to the first structure. Two shallow gables stretch above the full length of the south elevation; a veranda and deck extend to the east. Both buildings are shingled.
- 410 . Rose Lea (ca. 1895-1905): A long, 1½-story, gambrel-roofed dwelling in the Colonial Revival style, designed by Woonsocket architect Willard Kent and built on what was originally part of the George V. Cresson estate. It has paired stone chimneys, a Tuscan-columned portico, and Palladian windows in gable-roofed dormers on the front and rear sides.
- 415 . Gillian Lodge/Allan McLane House (1886): A 2½-story, hip-roofed, Shingle Style dwelling designed by McKim, Mead and White of

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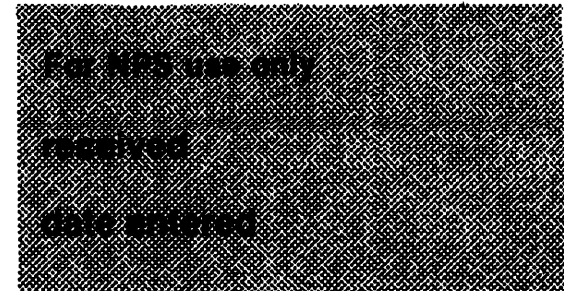
Ocean Road (cont)

- New York for Allan McLane of Washington, D.C. It has twin 3-story, hip-roofed front pavilions with a segmental-arch loggia between them, an octagonal corner bay, and stone chimneys. It was begun in August, 1885, and completed in 1886 at a cost of \$12,626.
- 430 House (1885-1886): Two side-by-side gambrels and an irregular gable roof cover the rectangular mass of this 1½-story, shingled structure, built as the carriage house for Sea Meadow (11 Newton Avenue) (q.v.).
- 434 Mrs. Samuel Welch Carriage House (1887): Originally erected as the carriage house for Wildfield Farm (20 Wildfield Farm Road), this small, 1½-story structure echoes many Queen Anne design features of the main house. Fieldstone, which forms some of the walls, arches around a broad, leaded-glass window on the north elevation. A fieldstone chimney rises through the hipped roof. A fanciful stone gateway to Wildfield Farm stands adjacent.
- 445 This generously proportioned Dutch Colonial house, built c. 1920-1930, has a handsome fanlight doorway, a Tuscan porch on the west side, and a massive boulder chimney. It is sited back from the road in well landscaped grounds behind a fence and hedge. A garage and caretaker's house stands behind the house.
- 449 This handsome, stuccoed, 2½-story house (c. 1910-1920) with red tile cross-gable roof, polygonal 2-story front bays, and first floor front veranda, stands well back from the road behind a manicured lawn. Stone gate posts mark the driveway which curves in toward the house.
- 450 Dorothy R. Fells Carriage House or Garage (ca. 1913): This 1½-story, rectangular structure is covered by a gambrel roof, on which is centered an octagonal cupola. It was originally built as a carriage house or garage for #460.
- 460 Dorothy Randolph Fells House (ca. 1913): A rambling, 1½- to 2-story Dutch Colonial Style structure with a flank gable roof punctuated by two front gambrels. Two prominently placed, exterior fieldstone chimneys rise along the gambrels, and other chimneys show above the roofline. Dorothy Fells purchased the property from Philip S.P. Randolph in 1913. She later married Ogden L. Mills of New York, who served as Secretary of the Treasury from 1932 to 1933. Mrs. Mills sold the property to S. Hinman Bird in 1929.

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Wildfield Farm Road

- 25 • Wildfield Farm (1887): A large, 2½-story, gable-roofed Shingle Style-Queen Anne Dwelling with complex massing, decorative half-timbering in the gables, Queen Anne windows, and stone chimneys. It was built for Mrs. Samuel Welch of Philadelphia.

Non-Contributing Structures

Newton Avenue

- 21 Residence (ca. 1955): A long monitor dormer runs along the gabled roof of this 1½-story structure. A 1-story connection to the west attaches to a garage.

Ocean Road

- 364 Residence (ca. 1950): A 1½-story building with a flank gable roof from which protrude 3 gable-roofed dormers. A 1-story garage is attached to the north.
- 433 Residence (ca. 1970): A 1-story, L-shaped house with pent roofs, 1/1 double-hung and picture windows, and vertical wood sheathing.

Wildfield Farm Road

- 20 Residence (ca. 1960): A 1-story, shingled, gable-roofed dwelling with a large central chimney. A gabled pavilion projects seaward.
- 20A Residence (ca. 1960): A shingled, 1½-story, gable-roofed dwelling. A 2-story extension to the east has sliding glass doors filling most of the elevation facing the ocean.

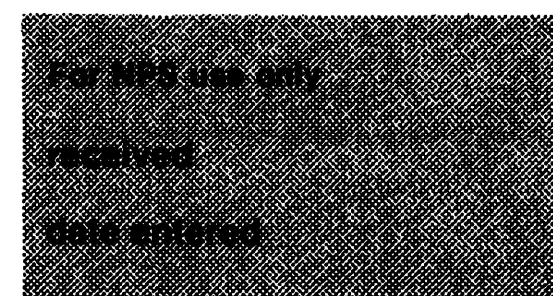
31

DATES: 19th and early 20th centuries

SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Other: Resort/Recreation, Social History

The well-preserved Shingle Style and Colonial Revival residences lining the Atlantic Shoreline in the Ocean Road Historic District reflect Narragansett Pier's coming-of-age as a summer resort colony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The houses were designed for wealthy summer residents who, caught up in the Victorian enthusiasm for seaside resorts, were attracted by opportunities for bathing and socializing available at the Pier, and could afford to maintain private accommodations rather than lodge, as most visitors did,

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at the many hotels clustered near the beach. The district was limited to residential development by deed restrictions written in by major land owner Joseph Peace Hazard. When Hazard sold his ocean-front lots in 1865, he also made provision for a public right-of-way along the edge of the rocky bluffs overlooking the shoreline, a walkway similar to the far more famous Cliff Walk in the resort of Newport. The district comprises buildings by McKim, Mead and White (55 Newton Avenue and 415 Ocean Road) and the Boston architect William Gibbons Preston (362 Ocean Road) as well as attractive structures by as yet unknown designers, and Hazard's Castle, an unusual stone residence with a 105-foot tower that is a prominent local landmark.

The Shingle Style, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival architecture in the district is typical of that found in the many Late Victorian communities that dotted the Atlantic shore. Within Narragansett Pier, however, the residences are a unique grouping, the physical evidence of a wealthy class that, though in the minority, were a very visible force in Pier life. Built on a relatively grand scale on spacious lots beside the ocean, these houses were unmatched by most other residences in Narragansett Pier.

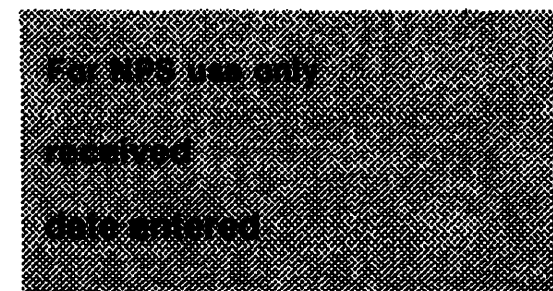
It is not a surprising coincidence that most of the Ocean Road residences were built shortly after the Narragansett Casino opened in 1885. The Casino drastically changed the Pier by fostering a lifestyle more formal and fashion-conscious than what had previously existed. Some of the prosperous cottagers felt that the Casino was not exclusive enough: in the 1890s they organized the private Point Judith Country Club, conveniently located on a former farm just south of the area included in the district. The country club provided facilities for more strenuous sporting activities, such as golf and polo, that were gaining national popularity.

Some individuals who established summer houses along Ocean Road were of regional or national repute. Flat Rock and Grove Cottages (5 and 15 Hazard Avenue) were owned by the Rev. Francis Wharton of Philadelphia, a professor at the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during the 1870s, and legal counsel to the U.S. State Department in the 1880s. Charles H. Pope, chief partner of a New York cotton brokerage firm bearing his name, owned Over Cliff (352 Ocean Road). Joseph Peace Hazard, who came from a prominent Rhode Island family and once owned much of the land in southern Narragansett Pier, left a monument to himself in the form of Hazard's Castle, and he unintentionally made many contributions to local lore as a result of his mystical beliefs.

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ACREAGE: Approximately 92 acres

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION (letters and numbers refer to plats and lots): The Ocean Road Historic District boundary is drawn to include a visually coherent group of residences and properties developed during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries along Ocean Road. As much as possible, mid- and late-twentieth century intrusions have been excluded from the district.

Beginning at the southwest corner of the district at the southwest corner of lot G20; running east on the south bound of G20 to Ocean Road; east across Ocean Road to its eastern edge; south on that edge to the southwest corner of G10; east along the southern boundary of G10; turning south along the western edge of G9; running east and northeast on the south and southeastern bounds of G9 to Wildfield Farm Road; in the same line across Wildfield Farm Road to its northern edge; east on that edge, which is also the southern boundary of G9-A and continuing east on the south bound of G9-A to the Atlantic Ocean. Thence north along the coastline to the northeast corner of lot E157; west along the north bound of lot E157 and lot E146 to Ocean Road; south along the eastern edge of Ocean Road to Hazard Avenue; west across Ocean Road and along the northern edge of Hazard Avenue to a point opposite the northwest corner of lot F17; south on the western bound of lot F17 and east on the southern bound of F17 and F18 to a point 100 feet west of Ocean Road; thence south 150 feet and east 100 feet across lot E27 to Ocean Road; thence south on the western edge of Ocean Road to the northeast corner of lot G14; west and then south on the north and west bounds of G14 to the northwest corner of G15; west across a private way to the northeast corner of G16; west and south on the north and west bounds of G16 to the north bound of G20; west on the north bound and southeast on the southwest bound of G20 to the southwest corner of G20, the point of beginning.

UTM: A 19/295160/4587710 E 19/294850/4587780
B 19/294910/4586700
C 19/294140/4586940
D 19/294540/4587620

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: State

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featuring long verandas and a roofline interrupted by turrets, dormers, and cupolas (see photo #17). The building housed dining rooms, lounges, a billiard hall, and ballroom. The Casino grounds held an "Italian garden," tennis courts, a bowling alley and rifle gallery. Fire destroyed the structure in 1900 leaving only the round stone towers, connected by a broad arch spanning Ocean Road. The roof and interior of "The Towers" were restored in 1910, and again in 1965 following another fire. The Towers, a major landmark in the area, was listed on the National Register in 1969 and is now used as an office and tourist information center by the Narragansett Chamber of Commerce. A grassy expanse along Exchange Street, maintained by the town as Memorial Park, occupies the Casino's former site.

Construction of a U.S. Coast Guard Lifesaving Station in 1888 just south of the Casino added another handsome structure to the waterfront. It, too, was designed by McKim, Mead and White, and its rock-faced granite walls match the Towers. It contained a boat storage area on the first floor and quarters for the station crew under the gable above. Removed from active service in 1937, it has been rather insensitively altered for use as a restaurant, yet its form and materials still complement the neighboring Towers. The station was added to the National Register on June 30, 1976.

INVENTORY:

Structures and sites in the Towers Historic District are considered to be contributing if representing the period during which Narragansett Pier grew into a summer resort colony (late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) and/or complementing the visual or historical continuity of the district. All structures in the district are wood frame unless otherwise indicated.

Contributing Structures and Sites

Exchange Street

Memorial Park - from Mathewson Street to Ocean Road: The site was purchased by the town for the sum of \$25,000 in 1931, and covers the site of the original Narragansett Casino, destroyed by fire in 1900. One tower of the Casino, still supporting an arched promenade over Ocean Road, rests on the park's eastern edge. The park also holds a granite memorial to members of the Narragansett Pier Fire Department, a fountain composed of four cavorting dolphins, and a flag pole supported by a tripartite concrete monument. The outer sections of the monument contain bronze plaques listing the World War II local honor role; the central panel features a high relief sculpture of a soldier designed by Florence Brevoort Kane, an area native who studied and spent most of her life in France. The park received its present name in 1950.

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- 18 The Wagon Wheel (probably 1822): A 2½-story, gable-roofed dwelling with a gabled ell on the south side, a center chimney, a veranda, and a Federal doorway with side lights, surmounted by an entablature with consoles. This is probably the house, mentioned in J.R. Cole's History of Washington and Kent Counties, Rhode Island, that George Brown built in 1822 opposite the North Pier. It was later moved to the site of Pier Pharmacy (#14 Mathewson); circa 1890 it was turned 90° and again moved, this time one lot south to its present site.
- 18A Tally Ho (ca. 1890): A 2½-story cubical structure located on a small driveway behind Wagon Wheel (#18). The truncated hipped roof holds gable-roofed dormers, the front (northern) one displaying a Palladian window. A late Shingle Style veranda incorporating paired colonettes projects from the building on the north and east; the eastern section has been enclosed. A gable-roofed ell and other additions are attached to the south.
- 20 House (ca. 1875): A 2-story, clapboarded structure composed of rectangular masses, banded by a modillion cornice which supports the projecting eaves of a flat roof. An open veranda with gracefully curved brackets (somewhat obscured by wooden trellises) and jigsaw ornamentation on the balustrade partially surrounds the first floor. A tower, modestly decorated by two bands of scalloped shingles, is integrated into the building's bulk and stands only slightly taller than the house.
- 22 Ninigret Cottage (ca. 1875, additions ca. 1885): A 2½-story, gable-roofed residence, "L" in plan, originally covered by clapboards but now shingled. Beneath the north gable there remains part of the decorative bracing which was once topped by a finial and found on all gable ends.

Ocean Road

- 36 The Towers (1883-86): A 3½-story, stone structure consisting of two 3-story blocks with semicircular terminations, surmounted by hipped and conical roof forms and linked by a hip-roofed gallery supported by segmental arches which span Ocean Road. It was designed by McKim, Mead and White of New York, one of America's most prominent late 19th-century architectural firms, as an entrance to the Narragansett Casino, a rambling Shingle Style structure which was one of the architects' foremost achievements. The Casino was the center of social life for the local summer colony until its destruction by fire in 1900. The Towers was rebuilt in 1910 according to plans drawn by J. Howard Adams. After being damaged by fire in 1965, it was acquired by the town and has undergone rehabilitation

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- for use by the Chamber of Commerce. The Towers is an important historical relic, recalling the Pier's former popularity as a summer resort for people from all over the United States. Due to its prominent location and monumental design it is a key landmark and serves as a symbol of the town's civic identity.
- 40 U.S. Lifesaving Station, now called the Coast Guard House (1888): The original section of this building, a 1½-story granite structure with a semicircular end and a gable roof with semi-conical terminus, is now encased in unsympathetic concrete-block additions. Supposedly modeled after a lifesaving station in England, it was the first such building in America to be built of stone and was designed by McKim, Mead and White. Its form and materials harmonize with those of the nearby Towers, an earlier structure by the same architectural firm. The Coast Guard House served as a United States Lifesaving Station from the time of its completion until 1937. It is currently used as a restaurant.
- 41 Sea Lawn (ca. 1875): This 1½-story structure clad in vertical board siding (originally clapboarded) has a mansard roof pierced by gabled dormers. On the north side behind a 2-story stair tower is a large polygonal bay. There are smaller 2-story bays on the other sides, the eastern one centered over the front entrance, and an ell extends from the rear. A veranda along the east side has been enclosed in a very unsympathetic manner. Now an office and residence, this building was constructed to be "The Reading Room," a men's club, and was located on Mathewson Street with the side containing the tower and large bay facing front (west). It was moved to its present location in the late 1890s.
- 51 Hopewell (1870s, 1890s): A 2-story, gable-roofed frame dwelling with a veranda and a broad front gambrel containing a central Palladian window set under a shingled hood which swells out from the wall surface. Early photos show that the facade of this house originally had a pair of gable-roofed dormers breaking up through the eaves; the front gambrel is a later addition. This house belonged to Dr. Charles Hitchcock of New York, a prominent summer resident who played an instrumental role in founding the Narragansett Pier Improvement Association and the Narragansett Casino Association. Hitchcock was Charles F. McKim's personal physician and may have helped to obtain for him the commission to design the Narragansett Casino. The additions to Hopewell may have been designed by William Gibbons Preston of Boston. Howard Lapsley, Hitchcock's father-in-law, had Preston design a house for him down off the Ocean Road extension, and Preston's papers contain references which seem

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to indicate that Lapsley may have hired him to renovate Hope-
well in the early 1890s.

- 61 Miramar (1889-90): A 2½-story, gable-roofed, Shingle Style dwelling with an ell on the west side. It has a veranda with a conical-roofed semicircular end, gable-roofed dormers, a loggia at the northeast corner, and an oriel window on the south side. It was built as a summer residence by Dr. Bache McE. Emmett of New York on the site of the Narragansett House, the first hotel at the Pier.

Taylor Avenue

- 7 House (ca. 1890): A 2½-story building with clapboards covering the first floor and shingles above. The flank gable roof contains a monitor dormer. A second-story, shallow oriel centered in the front facade sits atop a small entry hood, supported by fluted posts, which covers a Colonial Revival doorway. A sloping roof emerges from the east end to protect an open veranda.
- 13 House (ca. 1875): A 2-story, gable-roofed building sheathed in clapboards, with a pavilion projecting on the front (south). The roof of the western section slopes down to the first floor on the front facade. A 1-story screened porch with delicately arched braces and a simple rail balustrade is attached to the front of the pavilion and another to the front of the eastern section.
- 17 House (ca. 1875): A 2-story, clapboarded building which has an "L" plan and is covered by a low-pitched hip roof. Beneath the eaves run a bracketed cornice and entablature with molding separating the plain architrave and frieze. The roof of the veranda on the east side is supported by simple brackets. The detailing is similar to 20 Mathewson Street.

Non-Contributing Structures

Mathewson Street

- 14 Pier Pharmacy (ca. 1970): A 1-story, concrete block rectangle faced with stucco on the front (west) and board and batten siding on the remaining elevations. Three triangular bays jut from the north side. A mock-mansard roof has been applied to the north and west sides. A narrow blacktop parking lot separates the building from the street.

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DATES: Late 19th and early 20th centuries

SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Resort/Recreation

A passion for seaside holidays swept the United States and other countries during the late nineteenth century propelling Narragansett Pier into national prominence as a major summer resort. Its fine beach attracted thousands of visitors, and the structures in the Towers Historic District are physical manifestations of the growth which resulted. Some visitors found accommodations in cottages, such as those along Mathewson and Taylor Streets; others were housed in hotels. In the mid-1880s construction of the Casino, the towers of which remain flanking Ocean Road, radically changed the Pier both by its imposing physical presence and by centralizing social life. The new order was short-lived. In 1900 a fire destroyed the Casino and the social ambience it served. Ironically, this echoed a decline in popularity of Narragansett Pier among long-term guests who felt inundated by growing numbers of day visitors, conveyed by improved transportation. While many traces of the late nineteenth-century heyday of the Pier have disappeared, structures in the Towers Historic District survive as a fragment of that era.

The site of the Towers Historic District has served as a center of development for the area since shortly after 1780, when John Robinson built a pier near the present site of the Towers to provide local farmers with a more convenient means of exporting and importing goods. It is to this wharf that Narragansett Pier owes its name. By 1801, when Robinson's son, Benjamin, inherited the property, a house and a store had also been built here. The pier was destroyed in the Great Gale of 1815 and was rebuilt by Rowland Hazard, who had purchased it from Robinson five years earlier. The property changed hands two or three times, finally coming into the possession of George Brown in 1822. At that time, Brown built a house on the site later occupied by the original Casino. This is probably the house which now stands at 18 Mathewson Street, used for many years as a summer rental cottage.

The pier continued to pass through a series of owners and lessees, one of whom, Jonathan N. Hazard, erected a planing mill, another wharf, and a steam gristmill (the first in the area) around 1850. In the meantime the South Pier area was being developed, stimulated by construction of a wharf in the early 1870s when the planing mill was moved from North Pier to South Pier.

This loss of commerce at North Pier was more than compensated for by a new, and soon frenetically expanding, industry: tourism. Proximity to the beach and community center made cottages in the Towers Historic District attractive to summer guests. Hopewell at 51 Ocean Road was the summer home of Dr. Charles Hitchcock of New York, an active Pier booster involved in the Narragansett Pier Improvement Association and

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the Narragansett Casino Association. Dr. Hitchcock was Charles McKim's personal physician and may have helped him obtain the commission to design the Casino. The doctor introduced many people to the Pier and thus encouraged many new investments in the community.

Cottages, hotels, shops, and in 1885, the Casino, formed a dense concentration of development along the shore in the last half of the nineteenth century. The intersection of Exchange and Mathewson Streets was a major hub of retail activity for the area. It received a setback in 1900, however, when the fire that consumed the Casino damaged many commercial buildings and destroyed the deluxe Rockingham Hotel, located across Exchange Street from the Casino. A resurgence of the Pier's vitality included construction of a new casino in 1905 and improvement of roads in the area. Although long-term summer visitors continued to come, they were soon outnumbered by day tourists, and one by one the old hotels disappeared. Among the last survivors was the Massasoit, directly across Mathewson Street from the district, which was destroyed in the early 1970s. The commercial center gradually became rundown. Natural causes sometimes accelerated deterioration: the 1938 hurricane annihilated a number of structures (although none were in the district) and shredded the surface and foundation of Ocean Road as well. The retaining wall along the ocean and a stone wall lining the west side of the road date from the subsequent reconstruction. An urban renewal project in 1971-72 completed the clearance of dilapidated buildings from land north of the district and built the nearby Pier Village, a residential and retail complex. The twentieth century has thus witnessed a nearly total transformation of Narragansett Pier's core.

The cluster of nineteenth-century structures in the Towers Historic District have survived as a fragment of an earlier, and very different, era. The Towers and U.S. Coast Guard Lifesaving Station, both by the firm McKim, Mead and White, are of great architectural significance by virtue of their design and their visual prominence in Narragansett Pier. The Towers and their connecting arch are the only remnants of the Narragansett Casino, built between 1883 and 1886. The Casino with its heavy, horizontal massing, rough-textured materials, and broad arch displayed design elements usually associated with Henry Hobson Richardson, in whose office both McKim and White had worked a decade earlier. It is similar in spirit to a building by the same architects in a neighboring resort dating from a few years earlier: the Newport Casino. Adjacent to the Towers is the Coast Guard Lifesaving Station, supposedly modeled after a station in England. Constructed in 1888, its form and materials were chosen to harmonize with the Narragansett Casino. Despite significant alterations suffered by both buildings, they maintain a sense of their original character and are important physical links to the community's late nineteenth-century growth.

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