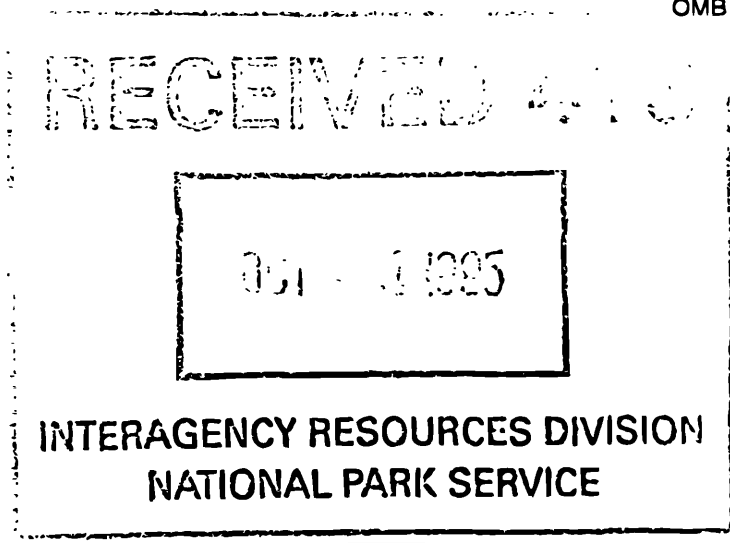


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



### 1. Name of Property

historic name: Clambake Club of Newport

other name/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number: 353 Tuckerman Avenue

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Middletown vicinity: N/A

state: RI county: Newport code: 005 zip code: 02842

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: Building(s)

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Property name Clambake Club of Newport, Newport County, Middletown, RI

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Frederick E. Williamson  
Signature of certifying official

29 Sep 1995  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

Edson H. Boall

Entered in the National Register

11.7.95

other (explain):

Boall  
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic: SOCIAL

Sub: Clubhouse

Current: SOCIAL

Sub: Clubhouse

Property name Clambake Club of Newport, Newport County, Middletown, RI

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification:

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY  
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials:	foundation	<u>STONE</u>	roof	<u>WOOD/shingle</u>
	walls	<u>WOOD/weatherboard</u>	other	_____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X See continuation sheet.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: state

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1895-1940 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates: 1895 c.1905 1938

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: \_\_\_\_\_ Hoppin, Col. Francis  
A Van Alen, William L.  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

Property name Clambake Club of Newport, Newport County, Middletown, RI

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property: 4.5 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>19</u>	<u>310010</u>	<u>4594300</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:  See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification:  See continuation sheet.

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/Title: Martha L. Werenfels, AIA, Principal Architect

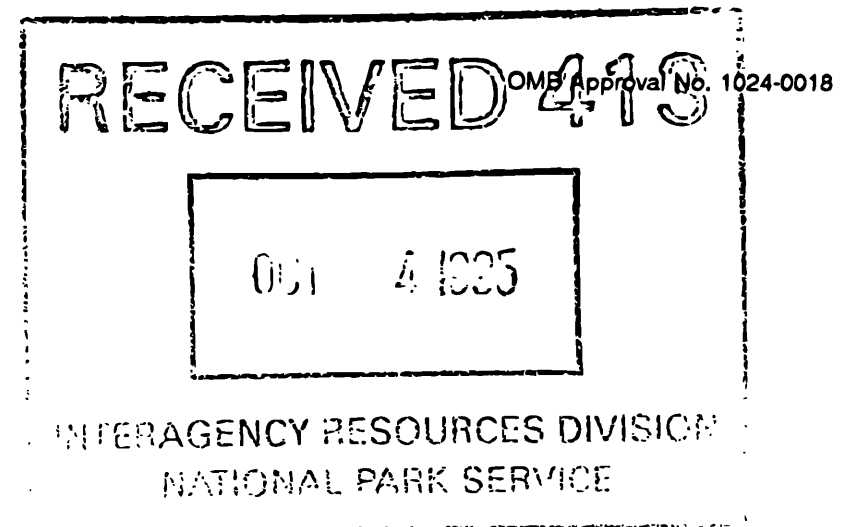
Organization: Conservation Technology Group Date: 5/13/95

Street & Number: 32 Green Street Telephone: 401-847-1546

City or Town: Newport State: RI ZIP: 02840

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### Description

The Clambake Club building is a fine example of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century vernacular seaside architecture. The modest, one-story, cross-gabled roof form is typical of the informal recreational buildings which once dotted the New England coastline. The simplicity of the design and materials represents a conscious effort by the founding members to create a relaxed, informal atmosphere for the enjoyment of clambakes and sporting activities.

#### DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

The Clambake Club of Newport is located in a residential neighborhood on Easton's Point in Middletown. While many of the surrounding residences were built during this century, there are some fine examples of late nineteenth century "summer cottages" as well. The club is situated at the southernmost tip of Easton's Point, and, with more than four acres, it occupies one of the larger pieces of property in the neighborhood. The site is relatively flat and grassy on the north and east sides of the clubhouse, however, it is steep and rocky on the south and west sides where the water's edge comes quite close to the building.

The Clambake Club, as it stands today, is a one-story, wood-framed building with an L-shape plan. The most prominent features of the building are the gabled roofs which enclose each of the two legs of the L. Several minor roofs intersect the two primary gabled roof forms, particularly where additions to the original building have been made. The majority of the exterior is covered with horizontal, weathered, cedar-board siding. The main roofs, which are clad with cedar shingles, are punctuated by large stone chimneys.

Some areas of the foundation of the building are exposed, irregularly-cut stone, while other areas have been stuccoed. In many locations, a simple, flat, wooden water table extends nearly to grade. There is no basement beneath the building. On the south elevation, where the site drops off sharply along the water, portions of the building are supported by masonry piers.

The most prominent feature on the north elevation of the Clambake Club is the cross-gabled projecting bay which forms the main entrance. There is an arched fan-light window above the wood-paneled entrance door and side-lights on each side. A flat roof supported by two stone piers creates a

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covered exterior space outside the front door. To the east of the front entrance, a secondary cross-gabled bay features a large, wood, six-part, multi-light window. This window provides natural illumination to the Long Room inside. Further to the east, the other leg of the L configuration extends to the north. This leg, which has been added onto several times, terminates with the utilitarian entrance to the kitchen and office portion of the building.

The south elevation of the building, which offers spectacular views of Rhode Island Sound, is characterized by a series of enclosed porches with large, single-light windows. At the east end of the south elevation, a porch enclosed by casement windows projects out over the rocky embankment. To the west of this porch, a cross-gabled bay (corresponding to the north-south leg of the L) defines the Members' Room inside. A projecting bay window, with a combination of fixed, single-light glass panes and casement windows, provides light to the Members' Room. Further to the west, a second enclosed porch opens off the Long Room and extends to the edge of the embankment. At the west end of the south elevation is another enclosed porch with a stone terrace outside.

The east elevation of the north-south leg of the L is relatively utilitarian in detailing and fenestration. The majority of this elevation is covered with natural cedar shingles, as opposed to the horizontal cedar-board siding that characterizes the other elevations. A projecting, cross-gabled bay extends the kitchen area to the east at approximately the center of this elevation. Typical windows on the east side are small, four-light wood sash. At the south end of the elevation, however, larger windows and sliding glass doors illuminate the enclosed porch. Two stone piers form the corners of the east end of the east-west leg of the L.

The interior of the Clambake Club is characterized by three primary areas--the Members' Room, the Long Room and the kitchen area--and several secondary spaces. One enters the building at the approximate center of the north elevation. To the east of the simple entrance hall is the Long Room; to the west is a glass-enclosed porch offering spectacular views of Rhode Island Sound and of Newport's Cliff Walk. The Long Room, which occupies a large portion of the east-west leg of the L, features four pairs of double glass doors leading to an enclosed porch along the south elevation, a large stone fireplace at each end, and partially exposed roof framing. Proceeding east from the Long Room, one enters the Members' Room, which is located at the crossing of the two legs of the L. The Members' Room features a large stone fireplace on the north wall, exposed roof framing, and interior walls finished with natural pine planks. To the north of the

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Members' Room, the north-south leg of the L contains utilitarian spaces. A large kitchen and pantry are located adjacent to the Members' Room, with club offices beyond. Like the Members' Room and Long Room, the principal kitchen area features exposed roof framing. All of the interior spaces are simple and informal in design and detailing.

In addition to the main Clambake Club building, the wedge-shaped site also contains two outbuildings--a Chef's Cottage and a Guest Cottage--and an area to the east of the main building which is used for skeet shooting. The Chef's Cottage, which is used as the residence of the club's chef, is located at the northern entrance to the site. It is a very small, wood framed, one-story cottage with a gabled roof. A one-room, shed-roofed addition extends to the south. The building is clad with natural cedar shingles and has an asphalt roof.

The Guest Cottage, which is used to accommodate members and guests of the club, is located at the top of the embankment that forms the western edge of the site. Like the Chef's Cottage, it is a very small, wood framed building with a gabled roof. A simple, gabled entrance portico projects to the east and a bay window has been added to the south elevation. The exterior of the Guest Cottage is clad with horizontal, weathered, cedar boards and a cedar shingle roof.

### CHRONOLOGY OF BUILDING CHANGES

The Clambake Club of Newport has occupied the current site at Easton's Point in Middletown since the 1890's. Organized in 1895, the club began using the Easton's Point site for their informal activities even before they had established a formal rental agreement with the owner of the property. By 1897, the club had rented the property at Easton's Point and had begun making improvements to the existing dwelling and stable.<sup>1</sup>

In 1903 the property was purchased by Center Hitchcock, one of the club's founding members. Based on a comparison of local atlases from 1895 and 1907, the first clubhouse built specifically to accommodate the Clambake Club's activities was constructed some time between the purchase

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<sup>1</sup>See article in Newport Daily News (Newport, Rhode Island), 15 July 1897.

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of the property in 1903 and the recording of a new building location on the 1907 atlas.<sup>2</sup>

Photographs that appeared in a July 30, 1910 article about the club in Town and Country show a building which is likely to be the first official Clambake Club facility. Club records indicate that this building was probably designed by Colonel Francis Hoppin. The 1910 photograph of the exterior of the club shows the north elevation of a simple, one-story, wood frame building with gabled roofs. A long gabled roof runs east to west, while two smaller cross-gables run north to south at the east end of the longer roof. The text of the article suggests that the spaces within the building are similar to those which exist today. According to the article:

The exterior of the club-house is very unostentatious and in this respect stands in great contrast to the palatial Golf Club where the members of the Clambake Club likewise gather. The interior, however, is quite well adapted for its purpose, being composed mainly of one long room of about 75 x 25 feet, having in addition kitchen, pantry, china room and bar.... The inside is simple and rustic.

Historic photographs indicate that this building remained on the site until 1938, but that various porches and extensions were added to the south (ocean) side and to the west end of the building. On September 21, 1938, an extremely destructive hurricane devastated much of coastal Rhode Island. Given its very exposed location, the Clambake Club fared relatively well. Photographs of the building immediately following the hurricane reveal that much of the south elevation and portions of the east end of the building were destroyed. The main body of the building, however, remained standing and largely intact.

Although the photographs show that much of the building survived the Hurricane of 1938, it is difficult to determine exactly how much of the original fabric was preserved when the club was rebuilt in 1939. A drawing in the records of the Clambake Club labeled "Architects' Design For New Building" presumably dates to 1939 when the clubhouse was rebuilt by

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<sup>2</sup>Everts and Richards, New Topographical Atlas of Surveys: Southern Rhode Island, Philadelphia, 1895; and L. J. Richards & Co., Atlas of the City of Newport and Towns of Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island, Springfield, MA, 1907.



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William L. Van Alen.<sup>3</sup> Because the building depicted in the drawing is similar to the circa 1905 building, it is unclear how much, if any, of the original building was incorporated during the 1939 rebuilding campaign. The drawing shows a one-story, wood frame building with a long gabled roof running east to west, and smaller cross-gables running north to south. The simple, vernacular architectural character of the building depicted in the 1939 drawing, and of the building that stands today, is very similar to that of the circa 1905 clubhouse.

Neither the Chef's Cottage, at the northern entrance to the property, nor the Guest Cottage at the west edge of the property, were standing in 1921.<sup>4</sup> These two buildings may have existed at the time of the 1938 hurricane, because the Club president, after describing the damage to the clubhouse, indicated that "the rest of the buildings on our property were not damaged...."<sup>5</sup> Because there had been other outbuildings on the site (a 1920's aerial photograph shows a stable at the southeast corner of the site, but not the Guest or Chef's Cottages), it is also possible that the Chef's Cottage and Guest Cottage were added post-1938.

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<sup>3</sup>William L. Van Alen, of Wilmington, Delaware, visited the Clambake Club and then corresponded with members during the summer of 1994. See William L. Van Alen, Wilmington, to Ed Lonergan, Newport, 23 August 1994.

<sup>4</sup>Sanborn Map Co., Atlas of Newport, Jamestown, Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island, New York: 1921.

<sup>5</sup>Maximillian Agassiz, Newport to Clambake Club Membership, Newport, 22 February 1939.

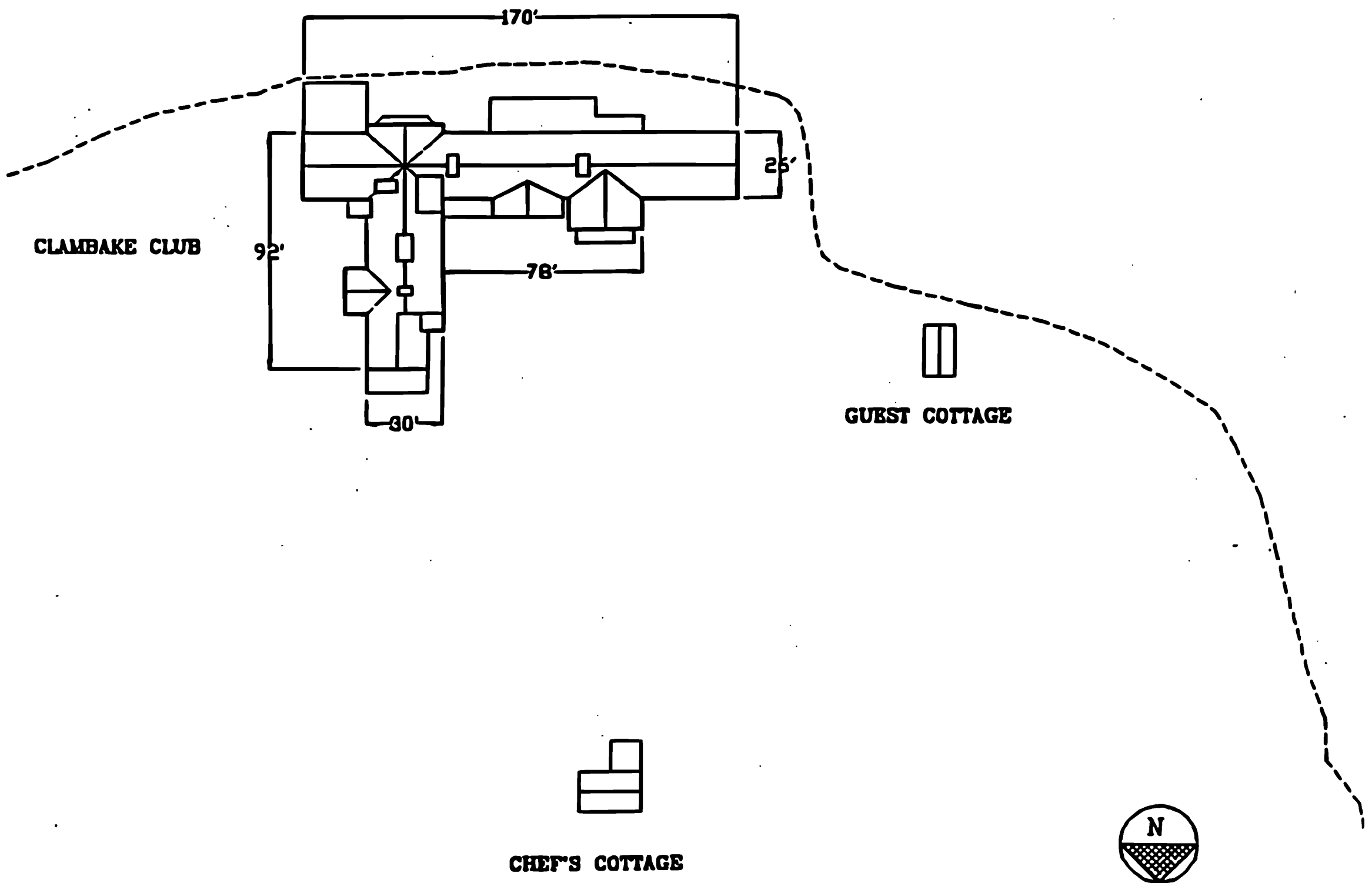
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**NOTE: CLAMBAKE CLUB IS DRAWN TO SCALE.  
LOCATION AND SIZE OF OUTBUILDINGS AND EDGE OF SITE ARE APPROXIMATE.**

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### Photograph Labels

(Numbers 1 through 5 apply to all photographs)

1. Clambake Club of Newport
2. Newport County, Rhode Island
3. Martha L. Werenfels, AIA
4. May 2, 1995
5. Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission
6. View of North Elevation of Clambake Club, camera facing South
7. Photograph #1 of 6
  
6. View of South and East Elevations, camera facing Northwest
7. Photograph #2 of 6
  
6. View of North interior wall of Members' Room, camera facing North
7. Photograph #3 of 6
  
6. View of West end of Long Room, camera facing West
7. Photograph #4 of 6
  
6. View of Guest Cottage, camera facing Southwest
7. Photograph #5 of 6
  
6. View of Chef's Cottage, camera facing Northwest (gabled roof of neighboring building in background)
7. Photograph #6 of 6

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### Significance

The Clambake Club of Newport is a rare survivor of the type of seaside recreational facilities that were prevalent along the Rhode Island and New England coastlines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Clambake Club, which is still used as it was since its founding in 1895, is representative of a tradition of culinary and sporting clubs by the sea. This tradition is an important aspect of Rhode Island's rich social and cultural history, but one that is little represented through surviving buildings.

The Clambake Club's by-laws indicate that the club was organized "for the purpose of charitable, scientific, artistic, social and sporting purposes of its several members...."<sup>6</sup> Throughout its history, the activities of the Clambake Club have included various sporting activities, such as fishing and shooting, in addition to those that are gustatory in nature.

Located in Middletown, the Clambake Club of Newport was founded by some of Newport's most prominent members of society in attempt to escape the pretensions and formalities of the Bellevue Avenue social scene. While the original members sought a country setting away from the busy streets of Newport for their leisure activities, the name that they chose makes their association with this prominent city quite clear. Some of the early members of the Clambake Club of Newport included Maximillian Agassiz, Cornelius Vanderbilt and Robert Goelet. Charles Oelrichs, a club president in the early 1900's, described the circumstances under which the club was originally organized. According to Oelrichs, there were several men "who hungered for the succulent clam and its accessories and not, mind you, served in the villas of the rich but in the open and in the simplest manner - hence our club." Although early clambakes were held at various sites, Easton's Point in Middletown soon became the preferred location. Oelrichs's letter goes on to describe the group's activities: "We made camp where ever we could, sometimes paying a nominal price to the owners - more often paying nothing. The west side of Easton's Point and back of Second Beach were the favorite resorts."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The Clambake Club of Newport, 1914, Organized 1895, Last Previous Issue 1911, at Redwood Library, Newport, RI.

<sup>7</sup>Letter from Charles Oelrichs (club president 1909-1911, 1915-1918) to Bradford Norman, 1930.

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Early Clambake Club members were not the only segment of Newport society that had discovered the pleasures of retreating to the country at the end of the nineteenth-century. In This Was My Newport, Maud Howe Elliott described how Ward McAllister popularized the pastime of picnicking in the country.

...he [Ward McAllister] was a man of social gift and charm who did much to preserve the more elegant traditions of an earlier day.... I remember one of his picnics, given at what is now "Bethshan-in-the-Woods," then known as Southwick's Grove. Several coaches conveyed the guests to the sylvan spot three miles from Newport on the West Road.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to picnics, a more specific type of culinary experience--the clambake--became a popular social activity in Rhode Island at the end of the nineteenth-century. In Clambake: A History and Celebration of an American Tradition, Kathy Neustadt explains that at the end of the nineteenth century the concept of leisure time had changed and a new interest in recreation and different ways to spend leisure time emerged. According to Neustadt,

Nearly invisible at the beginning of the 1800's, clambaking became by the end of the century a veritable institution in many parts of New England and an increasingly common metaphor for the region's bounty.<sup>9</sup>

Rhode Island figured particularly prominently in securing the popularity of clambakes. According to an article which appeared in the Providence Sunday Journal in 1906, the first known clambake for white men was held at Buttonwoods in Warwick, Rhode Island.<sup>10</sup> Buttonwoods was also the site of a well-publicized clambake held in 1840 in honor of presidential nominee William Henry Harrison. Rocky Point, also in Warwick, was another popular site for clambakes and was the location of one of the region's most popular clambake facilities. According to Neustadt, "taken in conjunction with the Harrison political bake of 1840, the success of

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<sup>8</sup>Elliott, Maud Howe, This Was My Newport (Cambridge, MA: The Mythology Company, A. Marshall Jones: 1944), 149.

<sup>9</sup>Neustadt, Kathy, Clambake: A History and Celebration of an American Tradition (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press: 1992), 49.

<sup>10</sup>"Where the Rhode Island Clambake was Born," Providence Sunday Journal, 1 July 1906, fourth section.

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Rocky Point fixed the association of the clambake feast with the state of Rhode Island...."<sup>11</sup> Neither the buildings associated with clambaking at Buttonwoods, nor those at Rocky Point, have survived.

The Hurricane of September 21, 1938, destroyed many of the clambake establishments and other recreational facilities that existed along the coast of New England. Most of those that were not destroyed in 1938, either closed during the Depression or during World War II, or were wiped out during the Hurricane of 1954. With its organization and roots firmly established at the end of the nineteenth century, the Clambake Club of Newport is a rare survivor of these threats to seaside recreational facilities. It is an exceptional example of the type of simple, unassuming facility that housed many private clubs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A similar facility, the Dunes Club in Narragansett, designed by Purvis, Cope & Stewardson, is also part of this tradition of informal seaside clubs. The present Dunes Club dates to 1939-1940. Although the Clambake Club of Newport was at least partially rebuilt in 1939, its membership has comprised some of Newport's most influential residents since 1895 and it has occupied its current site for at least that long.

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<sup>11</sup>Neustadt, 57.

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### Major Bibliographical References

Elliott, Maud Howe, This Was My Newport. Cambridge, MA: A. Marshall Jones, 1944.

Neustadt, Kathy, Clambake: A History & Celebration of an American Tradition. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992.

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### Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The boundaries of the site have remained the same since an "Abstract of the Title of Elizabeth P. Robbins" was prepared by Samuel R. Honey, Counselor-at-Law, at the time of the last property transfer in 1903. The attached map, which accompanied the 1903 Title Abstract, indicates the current boundaries of the site. The thirty-foot wide right-of-way at the eastern property line is still in existence.

A Site Plan (also attached) shows the roof plan of the main Clambake Club building drawn to scale. The locations and sizes of the Chef's Cottage and Guest Cottage are approximations, as is the location of the top of the embankment at the edge of the site. The property encompasses Town Assessor's Plat 122, lot 139.