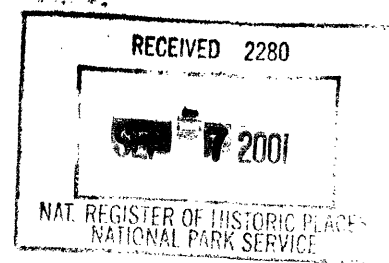


United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Multiple Property Documentation Form



A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of New Shoreham (Block Island), Rhode Island, 1636-present

B. Associated Historic Contexts

same as above

C. Geographical Data

Incorporated limits of Town of New Shoreham (Block Island), R.I.

 See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Frederick E. Williams
Signature of certifying official

Date 8/30/01

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Edson A. Beall
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date Oct 22, 2001

Property name Historic and Architectural Resources of New Shoreham (Block Island), Rhode Island, 1636-present

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

☒ See continuation sheet

F. Associated Property Types

☒ See continuation sheet

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

☒ See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

I. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Wm McKenzie Woodward

Organization: RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission Date March, 2001

Street & Number: 150 Benefit Street Telephone: 401-222-2678

City or Town: Providence State: RI Zip: 02903

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

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Physical Setting and Visual Character

Block Island's setting and natural resources are fundamental to understanding the island as it exists today. Its natural assets and deficiencies have played important roles in determining the island's history and development.

Block Island lies in the Atlantic Ocean, directly south of central Rhode Island (with which it is connected by a year-round ferry service), twenty miles southwest of Newport, and fifteen miles northeast of Long Island. The island separates Block Island Sound to the west from Rhode Island Sound to the east. Roughly triangular in shape, it is seven miles long and about three-and-a-half miles wide across its widest, southern part. The Great Salt Pond, opening on Block Island Sound to the west side, divides the smaller northern section, known as the Neck, from the southern part.

Geologically, Block Island bears little resemblance to the Rhode Island mainland. Formed during the last glacial period, between 27,000 and 13,000 years ago, it is part of an extensive terminal moraine and was once connected with Long Island, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and Cape Cod, to which it is geologically related. Like its geological cousins, Block Island is composed of loose glacial deposits and a small amount of other unconsolidated or weakly consolidated and sedimentary rock; bedrock lies far below the surface and is little exposed. Since its formation, Block Island has been subjected to steady erosion by winds, currents, and storms and thus, in geological chronology, enjoys only a transitory existence.

The surface of Block Island has an undulating, irregular—at places knobby—landscape, a wealth of ponds and wetlands, and abundant low vegetation, including small trees and shrubs. The land form is largely the result of glacial activity and subsequent erosion caused by wind and water. The highest point is Beacon Hill, southwest of the Great Salt Pond, which rises 211 feet above sea level. Several other hills in the southern section of the island exceed 150 feet. The coastline, subjected to constant change by erosion and sedimentation, ranges from low beaches on the north and west to high bluffs on the south and northeast. An ample supply of fresh water is provided by a complex aquifer system, which feeds many of the island's 360 fresh-water ponds and marshes.

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Beside the shifting and eroding coastline, land forms have changed little over the past few centuries; above-ground elements in the landscape—vegetation, buildings, and structures—have varied considerably through time. Man's presence has also occasioned sequential changes in visual character, so that landscape features developed for a series of sometimes contradictory uses now stand incongruously if picturesquely side by side.

Once heavily forested, Block Island was stripped of trees by the late eighteenth century, as European settlers felled the island's trees for farmland and used them for fuel and construction material. After the mid-nineteenth century, tourism superseded farming as the island's economic base, and opportunistic scrub vegetation gradually filled many of the old fields as well as the edges of side roads, ponds, and swales. While not "covered with trees," as Giovanni da Verrazzano described it in 1524, it is lushly blanketed with low-lying deciduous trees and shrubs.

Settlement is concentrated around Government Harbor, on the island's east side. The road system is limited to a few, paved two-lane roads which extend from the town center. The web of paved roads is extensively supplemented by unimproved lanes. For large portions of the island the lane remains the only means of reaching outlying fields and houses. These unimproved ways are often rough and narrow.

The landscape of Block Island reflects its evolution in land use from forest to farmland to heavy random vegetation, a sequence common throughout southern New England. Across the small-scale, gently rolling hills, the island's evolved landscape retains the stone-walled fields and extensive lane system of its agricultural phase and the larger-scale engineering and construction projects that recall its maritime and recreational activity: breakwaters, piers, lighthouses, hotels, and summer houses. Combined they create a vivid, historic landscape of great appeal.

Pasturage or tillage occurred islandwide, and an agricultural landscape developed through land clearance and construction of stone walls into a loosely organized rectangular patchwork of fields and lanes, a pattern evident even in revegetated areas.

By the mid-nineteenth century, this functional, open farm landscape was seen as "a great defect in the landscape, and a drawback to its pleasantness as a summer resort."¹ As tourism increased and farming declined,

¹Henry T. Beckwith, "The History of Block Island" *Historical Magazine*, April 1858.

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the open fields gave way to a softer landscape of scrub trees and thickets, especially in the many swales and gullies, alongside walls, and across abandoned farmland. The remaining cleared fields, however, evoke the agricultural landscape common a century ago.

Maritime and tourist activities superimposed changes on the agricultural landscape. The creation of two harbors—Government Harbor on the east and the New Harbor in the Great Salt Pond—both modified existing landforms and encouraged further development.

Today, the undulating land and lush vegetation provide an absorptive landscape that shields the growing number of new buildings. The land has long accepted the imposition of wall, field, and small house with exceptional grace. The gently rolling land, filled with small-scale buildings and rectangular fields, stands in contrast to the size and power of the ocean around it.

Because of the ocean, the island has a milder climate than the mainland: spring comes and fall lingers later, winter is milder, and summer is cooler. Weather is tempered by the Gulf Stream and the slow warming and cooling of the surrounding ocean. Storms punctuate the weather, and fog is common. Storm, fog, and treacherous sea have always played an important role in Block Island's history, especially in limiting access and development.

The survival of this remarkably intact and yet dynamic landscape owes much to limiting geographical factors. As for any island, physical isolation from the mainland here slowed settlement and development. Block Island was further hindered by its lack of a natural harbor. Consequently, the island never played a significant role in the extensive shipping activity that occurred along the New England coast during the first two centuries of European settlement. Only lighthouses and life-saving-stations served the many ships that sailed around—and occasionally to—the island.

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Discovery, Settlement, And Early Development: To 1850

Block Island's location and its lack of a natural harbor significantly restricted its appeal for settlement and affected its early history and development. Indeed, contact and settlement occurred relatively late in the context of coastal New England, and early growth was limited. For most of its first two centuries, Block Island remained a remote agricultural and maritime community whose economic activity was limited to trade in only a few commodities.

In 1524, Giovanni da Verrazzano noted the island in his diary as he sailed past it. The first recorded European contact occurred in 1614, when Adrian Block, a Dutch trader, initiated trade with the island's Indians, the Maniseeans. To European settlers, the island became known first as Adrian's Island and permanently as Block Island because of his repeated and probably exclusive communication with the island and its native inhabitants.

Block seems to have enjoyed peaceful relations with the Indians, but in 1636 they killed John Oldham, an English trader. Oldham's death prompted a retaliatory expedition from the Massachusetts Bay Colony; led by Colonel John Endicott, the expedition destroyed two coastal villages. The Endicott expedition formed the basis for the Massachusetts Bay Colony's claim to Block Island. Following a second expedition in 1637, led by Israel Stoughton, Narragansett sachem Miantonomi confirmed the Massachusetts Bay Colony's right to the island, and the Maniseeans agreed to pay an annual tribute to the colony. The archeological record of Native Americans on Block Island is unusually extensive and significant; it is not treated here. Easily visible evidence of Block Island's first residents is sparse, though the Indian Cemetery may be seen on the east side of Center Road, near the airport. The Indian population of the island diminished through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; in 1662, there were about 1000 Native Americans; in 1700, 3000, and in 1774, only 51.

Between 1638 and 1658, the island was not settled but used as a trading place, and for pasturing livestock. Trading places were established along the New England coast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an attempt to regularize activities between Europeans and Indians. Only one trading place, identified on a 1661 map and located between Harbor Pond and Crescent Beach, is documented on Block Island. Operated by a Dutch captain, Kempyo Sybada, it was seized by Captain Edward Hull in 1653 and thereafter operated by the English. These traders were probably the first white inhabitants of the island.

Ownership of the island changed frequently in the middle of the seventeenth century. In 1658, the Massachusetts Bay Colony sold the island to Richard Bellingham, Daniel Dennison, William Hawthorne, and

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John Endicott, who led the 1636 expedition. In 1660, the four sold the island for four hundred pounds to a company of sixteen men, led by John Alcock, M. D., of Roxbury, Massachusetts, who intended to "erect a plantation" there.

In 1661, Peter Noyse of Sudbury, Massachusetts, accompanied by proprietor Thomas Faxon, surveyed the island and divided it into over sixty lots. The lots were divided into seventeen portions, one for each of the proprietors and one for a minister;² there was no common land. Large rectangular lots were created on the Neck and across the broad southern part of the island, and smaller lots were arranged around the south and east of the Great Salt Pond. The large lots were oriented along an east-west axis, stretching across the Neck and divided on the southern part of the island into two tiers on either side of a north-south line. This organization suggests that concentrated settlement was planned for the center of the island, between the Great Salt Pond and the Island Cemetery, and that outlying areas were intended for farming and grazing livestock. Elements of the plan recall those of other late seventeenth-century Massachusetts Bay Colony settlements, such as Bristol and Barrington. The plan has a Rhode Island counterpart in East Greenwich.

The 1661 plan was remarkably little related to the island's topography and was probably modified or subdivided early, for only scant traces of it remain. The grid pattern of lot lines cuts across hill and hollow and through pond and swamp; this arbitrary geometry is common among seventeenth-century proprietary settlements. The plan had little effect on the island's evolutionary division and development. The organization of the principal road system organically responds to the island's topography, although several of the lanes and stone walls on either side of the Neck Road occur at the edges of old lot lines. The most obvious remaining evidence of the 1661 plan is at the Island Cemetery, at the southern end of the planned compact settlement, where the south and west boundaries follow original lot lines. The limited available time and the difficulty of surveying the heavily wooded island no doubt influenced the imposition of a conventional plan. It nevertheless provided a starting point, from which modifications dictated by daily use of the land could be made as needed.

In the spring of 1662 a band of fifteen set forth from Taunton, Massachusetts, in a barque built over the preceding winter; Thomas Faxon had gone to the island in the fall of 1661. Of this group of sixteen settlers, only

²The setting aside of ministerial lands was common in Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colony settlements; such lands were made available to a settlement's minister or—perhaps more commonly—rented to those not owning land, and the proceeds were used to support a minister. Especially in far-flung Massachusetts satellites, such lands were often put to their intended use considerably after settlement, if ever.

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seven were proprietors allotted parcels of land at the time of division. The rest must have rented the land from owners who remained in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and regarded their purchase as an investment.

None of the early settlers' buildings or structures remains on Block Island. Indeed, knowledge of the island's development during its first century is scarce. The area planned for compact settlement, on the south and east of the Great Salt Pond, may yet yield information through archaeology about the island's earliest settlers; however, it may never have been settled as planned. Further, the longstanding tradition of reusing building materials, especially after the island was deforested in the eighteenth century, suggests that early houses were routinely cannibalized when their utility had reached an end; beams or planks in such use are unlikely to reveal information about their original configuration.

Though nominally a part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Block Island was settled by independent-minded individuals sympathetic to the Rhode Island experiment, and early residents of Block Island established a settlement that varied socially and politically from the Massachusetts model. The first established church was not Congregational, like those in Massachusetts, but Baptist, like those in Rhode Island. And from the beginning, Quakers were welcomed. In 1663 the affinity was ratified when Block Island was included in the royal charter obtained from Charles II by Roger Williams. In 1672, the island was officially incorporated by the Rhode Island General Assembly and given the name New Shoreham "at the request and for the reasons by the inhabitants showed, and as signs of our unity and likeness to many parts of our native country."³ The name may derive from either—or both—Shoreham in North Downs on the Darent River or Shoreham-by-Sea on the English Channel in West Sussex.

Block Island's early white settlers, like the Indians before them, relied on farming the soil for their livelihood. Initially a few landowners farmed at a large scale, some using slave labor. As the island's population increased, the large farms were subdivided into smaller ones of 100 acres or less, and an agricultural trade economy developed. In colonial times the island's agrarian output consisted of cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, poultry, eggs, cheese, and grain. By the mid-nineteenth century the staples of the trade economy were corn, oats and poultry. The clearing of land for farms was at least partially responsible for the appearance of the island today. By the early eighteenth century the town discouraged the indiscriminate cutting of timber. Indeed, until the age of coal and oil, the island's principal fuel was not wood but peat dug from its wetlands.

³New Shoreham Town Charter, 1672.

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Despite the lack of a natural harbor, a trade in agricultural produce connected Block Island to Newport, Providence, New London, and Stonington. Agitation for a harbor began soon after European settlement. The first settlers saw potential for a harbor in two locations: the Great Salt Pond and within the broad crescent on the island's east side. The islanders' inability to realize a satisfactory harbor with ample moorings severely limited development and communication with the mainland.

The earliest efforts at creating a harbor were concentrated on opening the Great Salt Pond to the sea. At the end of the seventeenth century the first entry into the pond was formed by widening and deepening a creek that drained to the sea on the west side of the Island. Constant maintenance was required to keep the breachway open, and the town abandoned its efforts in 1705. The breachway continued to be used by small vessels until a violent storm closed the opening around 1720.

The area north of today's Old Harbor, along Crescent Beach, seems to have been used as a marine landing through the eighteenth century, until the Great Gale of 1815. In 1816, the Pole Harbor developed in this vicinity: tall poles sunk into the ground of the shallow cove provided moorings for the island's fishing boats. The Pole Harbor, however inadequate, was considered far better than no harbor at all and had more than a thousand moorings at its acme. It remained in use from 1816 until the present breakwater was constructed farther south on the island's east side in 1870-76.

Aids to navigation were required on Block Island's shores as shipping increased along the New England coast in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While the unsheltered shoreline restricted the island's access to visitors, it left the island vulnerable to war and piracy; the island was raided during the American Revolution and the War of 1812. The island's shoals and treacherous currents threatened shoreline travelers in the sea lanes between Long Island and Rhode Island Sounds. Maritime misadventures, strandings and shipwrecks around Block Island became familiar occurrences. The 1781 foundering of the British merchantman *Warrior* on the sand bar at Sandy Point and the 1806 wreck of Brown and Ives's *Ann and Hope* were living memories in the 1820s when Congress appropriated funds for the island's first lighthouse at Sandy Point, on the island's north end, in 1829. A succession of four structures served the north end of the island, but none lit the southern end of the island until the 1870s.

The few early buildings that survive on Block Island are vernacular houses similar to those built on the Rhode

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Island mainland from the late seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ Structures were built using post-and-beam, vertical plank-wall construction and covered with clapboards or, more often, shingles, a technology common to mainland Rhode Island. They are simple structures with low stone foundations and center chimneys; construction of the end-chimney house, the Rhode Island Stone-ender, is unrecorded on the island. Almost all of the early houses were one-and-a-half stories high with a simple gable roof or, more rarely, the double-slope gambrel roof.

The center-chimney Peleg Champlin House (ca. 1820) on Rodman Pond Lane is one of the best preserved of these. Its use of a traditional five-room plan and its simple geometry underscore the relative immutability of local building practices until the middle years of the nineteenth century. And, indeed, the similarity of form and plan shared by the few early buildings on the island makes difficult the task of assigning dates of construction and charting the developmental history of early Block Island architecture. Most early houses were once the center of a farm, surrounded by cleared fields outlined by stone walls, amid a small cluster of outbuildings—barns, sheds, privy, corn cribs. These outbuildings are the most fragile elements of historic farms, but several of Block Island's early houses, such as the Benjamin Littlefield House (1854 et seq.) on Corn Neck Road, are still surrounded by historic farm structures.

In 1850, Block Island houses were sprinkled across a cleared, hilly landscape. The area southeast of the Great Salt Pond, the area originally planned for compact development, had more buildings than other parts of the island; however, there was no identifiable town center, and commercial activity was carried out in three or four of small stores and in numerous private transactions involving cash or barter. Only one tavern, on the site of the First Baptist Church, stood on the island. The isolated and tranquil subsistence agricultural and maritime community was to change dramatically, however, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

"Rapid Improvement": 1850-1900

The character of Block Island and the course of its future development were significantly and permanently altered during the second half of the nineteenth century. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,

⁴None of the Rhode Island architectural studies examined Block Island's early houses, and such activity is beyond the scope of this study, which can only relate what is already known about Block Island's early buildings to the studies conducted principally by Norman M. Isham and Antoinette F. Downing.

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Block Island was transformed from an Indian settlement to a colonial European township; once this shift occurred, development proceeded in an established context with little external stimulation:

Its normal state for two hundred years was isolation. Its inhabitants had little intercourse with the mainland...and formed a sturdy, self-sustaining little republic, independent of their neighbors and careless of the great world without.⁵

At the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Block Island again captured the attention of off-islanders who created—or at least created a demand for—significant changes in the island's physical appearance and the introduction of buildings and structures quite different from those built over the previous two centuries. Understanding the context of these changes requires scanning broad patterns of activity occurring along the New England coast during these years.

The New England coast has long held appeal as a vacation spot. Beginning in the eighteenth century, South Carolinians and Georgians retired seasonally to Newport to avoid sweltering southern summers. America's industrialization and urbanization during the nineteenth century intensified the difference between town and country simultaneously making the former more crowded and the latter more accessible, through changes in transportation technology like the train and the steamship. Attractive spots along the coast began to develop as summer resorts in the 1830s and 1840s: Newport, Narragansett Pier, and Watch Hill began to experience more visitors during these years, and other coastal towns like Little Compton and Warwick soon saw similar development. While these vacation spots varied in character and clientele, their appeal originally relied on salubrity, simplicity, and natural, unspoiled beauty—all foils to complex city life.

Block Island underwent several signal changes. Improvements to navigational aids and to the harbor made the island more accessible to fisherman and visitor alike. Growing popularity for seaside vacations created a demand for boarding houses, hotels, and summer houses. In a short span of fifty years, Block Island's landscape acquired another layer of activity and of structures to house this activity. And while the assimilation of a summer community into a rural farming town sometimes occurred almost imperceptibly—as in Little Compton—the addition of new activities, new building types, and a new aesthetic forcefully affected the island's landscape and architecture.

⁵Charles Burr Todd, "The Island of Manisses," *Lippincott's Magazine* 30 (December 1882): 530.

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Resort development on the mainland often begins incidentally, but such activity on an island requires concerted effort. Because Block Island needed improved harbor facilities to succeed as a summer resort, the creation of the breakwater and harbor—known successively as Government Harbor, New Harbor, and Old Harbor—played a key role in the transformation. Other islands on the New England coast—Fishers Island, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard—enjoy natural harbors, but as the histories of the four islands differ remarkably, there is little basis for comparison among them. Within the context of the four islands, however, it is significant that Block Island was the first, and in some ways the only, one of the group to encourage summer visitors on a large scale.⁶

The first hotel on Block Island opened in 1842 near the north end of Spring Street, overlooking Government Harbor on the site of the later Adrian Hotel (now the First Baptist Church); the Spring House on Spring Street followed in 1852. Islanders began to take in vacationers during the late 1840s and 1850s, and by 1860 there were three hotels, with combined accommodations for a hundred visitors. Tourists remained hindered, however, by the island's limited accessibility.

The centuries-old problem of sheltered-harbor access was finally solved by the construction of Government Harbor on the island's east side. Island native Nicholas Ball (1828-1896)⁷ played a significant role securing the funding for the project: exploiting an extensive network of business and political connections, in 1867 he organized efforts to lobby the United States Congress for funding of a breakwater and harbor on Block Island. Work on the \$155,000 project began in 1870. Two rip-rap breakwaters of mainland granite extending into the ocean 1500 feet to the north and 1000 feet to the east were erected just south of Crescent Beach and at the junction of Spring, High, and Dodge Streets. The inner basin, built to protect equipment used during construction, was to be removed after the breakwater's completion but was left at the request of islanders. Building continued until 1876, but the harbor was in use by 1874, when a temporary pier accommodated the first large steamships to stop regularly.

⁶Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket both enjoyed strong economic bases derived from maritime pursuits and therefore were far more developed by the mid-nineteenth century. Martha's Vineyard's first significant summer population occurred because of Methodist camp meetings. Fishers Island remained in individual ownership until 1871, and its development as a summer colony was closely controlled by property owners.

⁷Ball went to sea in 1838, sailed to Britain and the Continent, and traveled widely in the western hemisphere. During the early 1850s he successfully panned for gold in California and in 1854 returned as a comparatively wealthy man to Block Island, where he managed an island hotel and represented the town in the Rhode Island General Assembly between 1854 and 1873.

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Concomitant with the creation of Government Harbor were other improvements to navigational aids. The 1829 lighthouse at the north tip of the island was replaced by successive structures in 1839, 1857, and—with the stone structure still standing—in 1867. The increase in sea traffic during the nineteenth century, and especially after the opening of the Government Harbor, occasioned greater maritime activity. The need for a lighthouse on the south side of the island was evident by the 1850s. Although Congress appropriated \$9,000 in 1856 for its construction, the newly formed U. S. Light-House Board applied the funds elsewhere, and the project languished. In 1872 Nicholas Ball, confident from his successful lobbying for the harbor, led a similar campaign for the South East Light, and in the spring of that year Congress appropriated \$75,000 for its construction. Placed into service in February 1875, the ample brick structure has a first-order Fresnel lens and fog signal house (since removed). Its design, similar to a lighthouse erected contemporaneously in Cleveland, Ohio, illustrates the Light House Board's tendency to rely on standardization in lighthouse design.

Two life-saving stations were constructed at the same time as the new lighthouse. Following the Civil War the U. S. Life-Saving Service expanded its services along the New England coast; the Service made a survey of the coast to determine sites, and through this tour and the persistence of Nicholas Ball, a station was located on Cooneymus Road in 1872. A second station, at Government Harbor on the east side, followed in 1874, and the west side station was replaced in 1886 with a structure built to a standardized design. Later stations were built on Crescent Beach in 1890 and at Sandy Point in 1900.

Fishing was the second industry of the island. The full realization of the island's potential fishing productivity was stifled by the lack of a good harbor, which did not exist until the establishment of Government Harbor (now Old Harbor). For years by necessity the Island made use of the double-ender, a distinctly New England boat which could be easily landed on the beach.

The creation of a harbor enabled the fishing industry to expand. Larger vessels were given access to the Island and fishing expeditions were able to go farther out to sea for longer periods of time. Cod and bluefish constituted the bulk of the commercial catch. Block Island cod acquired a reputation for excellence, surpassing the competition from Newfoundland in freshness and flavor.

The completion of Government Harbor spurred nearby commercial development. The loosely organized town center on the south side of the Great Salt Pond, never a cohesive core, was quickly abandoned in favor of the new district around the harbor. In the 1870s and 1880s the streets around the harbor began to fill with stores and institutional buildings. By the turn of the twentieth century, this area was the thriving commercial heart of the

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town. More significantly, the improvements introduced a new era of tourism for Block Island. Steamer service between Newport to the northeast and between New London and Norwich to the northwest soon swelled the island's summer population from one thousand to three thousand. A surge of new construction began in the 1870s to accommodate these visitors.

Summer colony development on Block Island, like that of most spots along the New England coast, follows a generally sequential pattern of boarding houses, hotels, and private summer cottages. The three phases often overlap, particularly in places like Block Island, where such development is intense and caters to a broad spectrum of holidaymakers. On the one hand, at the larger hotels the guests attended sophisticated entertainments and dressed for dinner. At the less expensive boarding houses, recreational activities were more informal and less structured.

The effects of the phases of boarding houses, hotels, and cottages on physical development vary considerably: boarding often occurred in existing houses and consequently effects fewer and less noticeable changes in building patterns. The construction of hotels and summer cottages, however, introduced new forms.

Hotel construction increased dramatically in the 1870s. Despite the depressed economy following the Panic of 1873, the lure of the newly accessible island created a building boom unusual for the times. Existing hostelries were expanded, and a number of new ones were constructed in the vicinity of the harbor: the Ocean View (1873-74), New Shoreham (1875), Manisses (1876), Surf (1876), Spring House (1877), Norwich House (1878), Pequot House (1882), Union (1883) Bellevue (1885), and New National (1888). By the turn of the century, island investment in hotels was estimated at \$400,000, and—importantly—most hotels were owned by islanders. The most ambitious of these was the Ocean View, built and owned by Nicholas Ball and opened just as regular steamer service became available: the three-story, mansard-roof structure stretched over three hundred feet along the Cliff Walk just south of the Government Harbor and provided rooms for five hundred visitors. Others ranged in size down to the twenty-room Manisses.

A third phase of summer colony development began in the 1880s with the construction of summer cottages. Most summer cottages were built by individuals for their own use; they were scattered across the island and often sited to exploit water views. There is no physical evidence of extensive planned development—like Buttonwoods in Warwick—although one corporation, The Block Island Land and Improvement Company, was chartered in

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1885 for "buying or building and maintaining a place or places of recreation and sojourn..." on the island.⁸ The activities of this organization deserve further study. The only planned group of buildings is the Vail Cottages, a sanatorium: Dr. Abby Vail of New York bought sixteen acres on the south side of the island in 1884 and the following year erected three cottages, one for herself and two for patients. The complex grew in the late nineteenth century with the addition of cottages and, in 1893, a hotel.

The new development in the second half of the century broke with island building traditions in two ways. Obviously, it introduced new building types: summer houses, hotels, and commercial buildings. Further, it introduced the island to mainstream, stylish American architecture. The buildings erected on the island before the second half of the nineteenth century employed traditional forms and details; little contact with the mainland and little change in the way life was lived occasioned neither need nor desire to modify building patterns. Any change in vernacular architecture was largely due to functional requirements rather than assumption of an external aesthetic. Beginning in the 1870s, however, Block Island was increasingly introduced to national and international architectural trends and was thus less completely reliant on vernacular tradition. Moreover, not only were the architectural ideas imported to the island, but the building components themselves were also brought over on the steamships that regularly plied the waters between the treeless island and the mainland. Of course the vernacular tradition continued into the twentieth century, particularly for modest dwellings and utilitarian structures.

Nineteenth-century American architecture is a rich tapestry of sources and styles. Some forms and styles were used for almost every type of building, while the application of other styles was more circumscribed. The relatively small number of building types on Block Island thus limited its range of new architectural design choices. Several important late nineteenth-century design trends occur often on Block Island and deserve consideration.

Picturesque informality became a guiding principle in the design of suburban and rural American domestic architecture beginning in the 1830s. In many important ways the picturesque aesthetic continued to inform the design of many country houses well into the twentieth century: while stylistic sources vary from decade to decade, as a group these houses are characteristically rambling, asymmetrical compositions, and their mass and detail have a delightfully fragmented quality.

⁸ *Charter and By-Laws of the Block Island Land and Improvement Society*; Providence (1887): 4.

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The range of picturesque dwellings on Block Island is predictably narrower than that found in nearby Newport⁹ but still remarkable in its variety, especially in contrast to the longstanding vernacular traditions. The variety resulted from changing fashion and the infusion of summer residents from other parts of the northeast: Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Connecticut. Within the range, several types are identifiable.

The island's earliest picturesque house¹⁰ was built—appropriately enough—the year steamer service began, in 1874. Darius B. Dodge's Gothic-inspired cottage follows in the rural Gothic mode introduced in houses like Richard Upjohn's George Noble Jones House, "Kingscote" (1839) in Newport and disseminated by publications like Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1842 et seq.) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850 et seq.). Downing promoted houses like Dodge's, "...characterized mainly by pointed gables," because "their outlines are highly picturesque and harmonious with nature."¹¹ And while this house was built for a native, year-round resident, it initiated a new direction for Block Island architecture. The circumstances of its construction further suggest the eagerness of islanders to create stylish new architecture and to move into a cultural mainstream.

Medieval-inspired forms remained popular for country-house use through the nineteenth century. The inspiration for later examples encompassed an ever broader range of sources, including rural vernacular buildings of Switzerland, France, Germany, and Scandinavia. David Van Nostrand's house, "Innisfail" (1884)¹² recalls these sources, especially as interpreted in Newport summer cottages of the 1860s and 1870s by Richard Morris Hunt. The turreted profile and the braced posts on the sweeping veranda of Everett D. Barlow's House (1886) fall within this category.

⁹The influence of Newport's late nineteenth century architecture on that of Block Island remains to be examined; however, some influence by that concentration of internationally important buildings must be assumed.

¹⁰The *Providence Evening Bulletin* on 9 June 1874 described the house as one "...which really makes more pretentions to 'style' than any other private residence upon our island."

¹¹Andrew Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences*, 9th ed. (Newburgh, N. Y., 1873), p. 23.

¹²The act of naming a house itself has significance. Named houses first began to appear on Block Island in the 1880s, and their presence suggests a new attitude toward the building.

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The second picturesque style, also much touted by Downing was the bracketed mode, whose character is "...derived mainly from the bold projection of the roof, supported by ornamental brackets, and from the employment of brackets for supports in various other parts of the building."¹³ Derived ultimately from Italian vernacular architecture, the bracketed mode was eminently adaptable for American use. Downing emphasized the utility of wide roof overhangs in shading the upper story in summer and recommended its use in warm climates. The bracketed mode enjoyed great popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century, and several examples rose on Block Island. The salient details of the Amazon Littlefield House (1889) are precisely those Downing stressed. Bracketed detailing was also applied to a number of otherwise vernacular buildings, as simply copied or readily available details became part of the island's local building tradition.

A third group that falls under the picturesque rubric shares its general characteristics but lacks historicizing forms and details. Such houses are cognates of the shingled mode, as developed by McKim, Mead & White—especially in Newport—and have an affinity with the naturalistic Craftsman-like houses built in rustic settings, like the Adirondacks. In its most reduced form, the picturesque quality derives from simple geometry, ample porches, and shingled wall cover, like Charles Fairfield's "Lakeside" (1893) or the Mark Potter House (1900-01). More sophisticated examples include Deming Perkins's "Bayberry Cottage" (1897), which relies on complex, interlocking geometrical forms, and L. V. Maltby's "Ninicroft Lodge" (1904), distinguished by a rough, rock-clad first story surrounded by a deep, circumferential porch and capped by a large, sweeping roof.

The predominance of the picturesque mode for Block Island summer houses is remarkable. The classical revivals of the late nineteenth century found little acceptance here. Only the domestic-scale United States Weather Station (1903) varies from the picturesque norm, and its appearance is the result of the use of a standardized neoclassical design. The conditions which usually encouraged classical-derived architecture were absent. The island had few extravagantly rich summer residents who built large Renaissance-inspired houses, like "The Breakers" in Newport.¹⁴ As the Colonial Revival emerged, other towns, like Litchfield, Connecticut or Little Compton, sought design refuge in their pasts. With little remaining from its early years, Block Island lacked local source material that often provided inspiration for new design in the Colonial Revival mode. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century summer houses here, more than in other summer places, tended away from colonial- and

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹⁴ Only the vast folly built by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Searles followed classical design canons; it was little used and seems always to have been regarded as an island oddity.

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Renaissance-inspired classicism and toward the picturesque informality that characterized the quality of summer life here.

Block Island's hotels of the period typify seaside New England resort architecture. Most of them are white, rectangular buildings two or three stories high with wide front porches and mansard roofs; prominent cupolas or projecting pavilions are centered on the long facades of many of them. The double-slope mansard roof, imported from Second Empire France, was coming into fashion in the 1860s and 1870s, just as Block Island began to develop as a summer resort, and its use continued here until the early twentieth century. While many other seaside resorts—like Narragansett—have lost the ample, mansard-roof hotels that characterized nineteenth-century watering spots, Block Island retains many examples.

The mansard roof introduced to Block Island in its hotels was also adapted for use in residential architecture. Captain Lemuel A. Dodge's house (1879) continues a standard island form, five bays wide and two bays deep, and incorporates both picturesque detail in its full width front porch and bracketed eaves and a stylish bell-cast mansard roof. The form was also grafted onto existing buildings, like Gideon Rose's house, later known as "Woonsocket House"; its use here was surely to change the old building's image to advertise its new life as a boarding house.

At century's end, a final improvement was made to navigation. Excavation of a breachway into the Great Salt Pond began in 1894, and by 1898 the New Harbor was accessible to ships, and a new wharf had been constructed on its south side. By the early years of the twentieth century Block Island was largely transformed:

Farming and fishing were practically the sole industries of the people up to the middle of the last century, when the beauty of the place and its unparalleled hygienic attractions began to draw attention to it as a summer resort and it is celebrated all over the world, and the thirty or more hotels, and the cottages of its summer residents, add an important factor to the old industries.

...the Island no longer needs the aid of legend or poetry to bring people to its shores; it is...a Mecca for the invalid in mind or body, and a delightful summer home for those who would recuperate from the maddening whirl of modern life.¹⁵

¹⁵Charles E. Perry, "Block Island's Story," *New England Magazine*, July 1904, pgs. 518, 524.

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And just as the island settled into a pattern of subsistence fishing and farming after its colonization in the seventeenth century, so too did it settle into a new rhythm of life as a summer resort.

Waxing, Waning, and Waxing: 1900-present

Block Island's first heyday as a summer resort occurred during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Following this peak, summer trade continued on the island but at increasingly reduced levels, particularly among those who came to stay in hotels or boarding houses. The island's agricultural and maritime base eroded too, and its year-round population declined from approximately 1500 in 1900 to a low of 489 in 1970; by 1980 it had risen only to 610. Construction and tourist activity slowed considerably during the middle years of the twentieth century, only to revive in its last quarter, about a century after the first waves of holidaymakers stepped off the steamers at Government Harbor.

With the gradual decline in coastal sea disasters that followed the rise in steam navigation, the need for the Life-saving Service became less acute. In 1915, the Service was subsumed by the newly created U.S. Coast Guard, but activities at the life-saving stations continued unchanged for some time. The construction of a modern Coast Guard station at Cormorant Point on the Great Salt Pond in 1935 marked the end of active service in the old life-saving stations, though the shores of Block Island continued to be patrolled through World War II. The new Coast Guard station was located on the New Harbor channel where its crew could monitor harbor traffic and obtain a still water launching site for the rescue boat. The station and boathouse continue in use by the Coast Guard today.

The hotel business thrived during the early twentieth century. In 1900, the island counted twenty-two hotels with a combined capacity for almost 2,500 guests. The numbers of both hotels and beds rose during these years and peaked just before World War I, when nearly thirty hotels could accommodate over 3,100 guests, and the island counted as many as 56,000 visitors annually.¹⁶

¹⁶William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, (Pittstown, New Jersey, 1988, p. 128.

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Fishing flourished from the creation of Government Harbor until the mid-twentieth century, when the hurricane of 1938 followed by World War II precipitated its collapse as a major endeavor. After the war, the State invested heavily in the development of Point Judith as fishing port, undercutting attempts to rebuild the island fleet. Today there remain a few boats that regularly use the island but, for the most part, fishing boats have given way to recreational boating. What remains provides a visual reminder of the decades when fishing boats and fish houses dominated a simpler harbor. In their place there are passenger boat ramps, a dock, and buildings which cater to visitors.

The decline in hotel trade began around the time of World War I. Between 1915 and 1920, the number of hotels dropped from twenty-seven to thirteen, and their combined capacity was cut by a third, to approximately 2,000. The decline continued through the 1920s, as social patterns changed dramatically, and intensified during the Depression, which most affected the clientele of hotels and boarding houses. World War II further restricted traveling, and by 1950 many of the large hotels were closed or little used.

Block Island's summer house owners continued to return annually as their situation was little affected by the decline in hotel and boarding house trade. But the dearth of summer houses built between 1910 and the 1950s suggests that the island no longer attracted numbers of new summer residents. Its image was clearly suffering, as suggested in the late 1940s by a Fishers Island summer resident:

On a clear day I could see the people on Block Island drinking martinis...if they drink martinis on Block Island. They used to, you know. Block Island used to be very fashionable.¹⁷

Little was built during the middle years of the twentieth century. A weak economy and declining population created little demand for additional buildings or structures. The consolidated school, completed in 1933, was a significant construction project.

During the 1950s and 1960s Block Island began to show signs of revival. The airport, first suggested in the mid-1930s, was completed in 1950; sited on a hundred-foot-high plateau at the island's center, it made the island more accessible from the mainland by reducing travel time from over an hour to fifteen or twenty minutes. In 1954, the state built a bathhouse at Crescent Beach. Block Island Race Week, instituted in 1965, signaled the

¹⁷Cleveland Armory, *The Last Resorts*, (New York, 1948), p. 135.

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place's growing popularity among sailors and has attracted increasing numbers of participants, who find the island an easy day sail and make use of extensive docking facilities in the New Harbor.

Since the early 1970s Block Island's fortunes as a summer place have revived considerably. Construction of new summer houses increased dramatically during that decade. Further, a number of the old farm houses and early summer houses have been restored or remodeled for summer use; even the 1886 Life Saving Station on the west side has been recycled as a summer house. Changes in the federal income tax code since 1976 have encouraged some renovations of commercial properties; owners of such properties may now be eligible for tax credits in certain circumstances. A number of the hotels have been rehabilitated, beginning with the Manisses in the mid-1970s and including the Eureka, the National, the Blue Dory, the Spring House, and the Pequot House, now known as the Harborside Inn. In 1974 the Old Harbor Historic District, encompassing the town center, was added to the State Register and National Register of Historic Places, and in 1982 the Town of New Shoreham created a local historic district at Old Harbor, ensuring that proposed changes to the exterior of the historic buildings are reviewed by the New Shoreham Historic District Commission.

Just as it did a century ago, Block Island is once again flourishing. It attracts increasing numbers of day or weekend visitors as well as residents of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York, who make their summer homes here. The poverty of the mid-twentieth century has been replaced as the island's largest problem: overdevelopment is now the island's chief threat. Without careful stewardship of the island's natural and man-made resources, Block Island could well lose those qualities memorialized in verse a century ago:

Circled by waters that never freeze,
Beaten by billow and swept by breeze
Lieth the island of Manisees,[sic]

Set at the mouth of the Sound to hold
The coast lights up on its turret old
Yellow with moss and sea-fog mould.

Dreary the land when gust and sleet
At its doors and windows howl and beat,
And winter laughs at its fires of peat!

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But in summer time, when pool and pond,
Held in the laps of valleys fond,
Are blue as the glimpses of sea beyond;

When the hills are sweet with the brier-rose,
And, hid in the warm, sweet dells unclosed
Flowers the mainland rarely knows;

When boats to their morning fishing go,
And, held to the wind and slanting low,
Whitening and darkening the small sails show,—

Then is that lonely island fair;
And the pale health-seeker findeth there
The wine of life in its pleasant air.

No greener valleys the sun invite,
Or smoother beaches no sea-birds light,
No blue waves shatter to foam more white!¹⁸

¹⁸John Greenleaf Whittier, "The Palatine," *The Complete Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, (Boston & New York, 1910), v. 3, p. 8.

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F. Associated Property Type

Collective Residential Buildings: Hotels

Description:

This property type includes hotels that were constructed to house summer visitors to Block Island. Examples of this type are likely to date from the mid-nineteenth century, when Block Island first became a summer resort for vacationers from elsewhere, through the first two decades of the twentieth century, when the island experienced its greatest boom as a resort. Examples of the type will vary in size, from large hotels built to accommodate hundreds of guests to smaller buildings with but ten or twelve rooms.

Examples of the type will likely be constructed of wood, the most important building material on Block Island. In form, examples of this property type will reflect two important themes in the island's architectural history: the persistence of vernacular forms dating from the earliest centuries of settlement and a parallel introduction of new forms and building types to accommodate visitors. Thus, small hotels may be constructed on a domestic scale, only somewhat larger than single-family houses. Larger hotels are likely to be long buildings, 2, 3, and 4 stories tall, often with long porches that take advantage of water views. Similarly, examples of the type will evidence two long streams of architectural style in the island's history—modest, utilitarian buildings of the island's vernacular tradition, which produced simple structures, boxy in shape, 1 or 2 stories, with gable roofs, and buildings which reflect in their form or detail mainstream architectural fashions, especially the Second Empire style's mansard roof. Usually, public rooms (parlors, dining rooms, and the like) are located on the first floor; guest rooms are located in upper floors.

Hotels are concentrated in the area of Block Island near Old Harbor but are also scattered throughout the island, many sited on prominent locations to take advantage of views. Most will be located on relatively small lots (which characterize the island's development); National Register boundaries will encompass the lot historically associated with the hotel. Some may have adjacent auxiliary structures (for storage, kitchens, and the like) and annexes (for overflow guests in the busy season).

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Significance:

Block Island's hotels are significant for their ability to document an important theme in the island's development, its role as a summer resort for visitors from elsewhere. Some hotels also have the ability to document the introduction of new building forms and mainstream architectural ideals to Block Island. Some are also significant as contributing components of historic districts. Block Island hotels may qualify for registration under Criterion A or C.

The first hotel on Block Island opened in 1842 near the north end of Spring Street overlooking Government Harbor on the site of the later Adrian Hotel (now the First Baptist Church); the Spring House on Spring Street followed in 1852. By 1860 there were three hotels, with combined accommodations for a hundred visitors.

Hotel construction increased dramatically in the 1870s. The improved accessibility of the island (with the construction of a sheltered harbor in the 1870s) created a building boom. Existing hostelrys were expanded, and a number of new ones were constructed near the harbor: the Ocean View, New Shoreham, Manisses, Surf, Spring House, and Norwich House Hotels date from the 1870s; the Pequot House, Union, Bellevue, and New National Hotels date from the 1880s.

The new development pattern of the second half of the nineteenth century (including not only hotel construction, but also the conversion of existing houses to boardinghouses and the construction of summer cottages) broke with Block Island building traditions in two ways. It introduced new building types and also introduced the island to mainstream stylish American architecture. The buildings erected on the island before mid-century employed traditional forms and details; little contact with the mainland and little change in the way life was lived occasioned neither need nor desire to modify building patterns. Beginning in the 1870s, however, Block Island was increasingly introduced to national and international architectural trends.

Block Island's hotels of the period typify seaside New England resort architecture. Most of them are rectangular buildings, 2, 3, or 4 stories high with wide front porches and mansard roofs; prominent cupolas or projecting pavilions are centered on the long façade of many of them. The double-slope mansard roof, imported from Second Empire France, was coming into fashion in the 1860s and 1870s, just as Block Island began to develop as a summer resort, and its use continued here through the early twentieth century.

The hotel business thrived during the early twentieth century. In 1900, the island counted 22 hotels with a combined capacity of almost 2500 guests. The numbers of hotels and beds rose during the first decade of the

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century and peaked just before World War I, when nearly 30 hotels could accommodate over 3100 guests, and the island counted as many as 56,000 visitors annually.

The decline in the hotel trade began in the 1910s as Block Island declined as a fashionable resort. Between 1915 and 1920, the number of hotels dropped from 27 to 13, and their combined capacity was cut by a third, to approximately 2,000. The decline continued through the 1920s as social patterns altered, and intensified during the depression of the 1930s. World War II further restricted travel, and by 1950 many of the large hotels were closed or little used.

CRITERION A: Block Island's hotels are significant because they illustrate important aspects of the island's developmental history, especially the conversion of the island from a relatively isolated fishing and farming outpost to a fashionable summer resort. Likely areas of significance are Entertainment/Recreation and Social History.

Hotels also illustrate an important theme in the architectural history of the island, the introduction of mainstream architectural ideas to a landscape previously dominated by buildings that reflect vernacular traditions; the area of significance is Architecture.

CRITERION C: Block Island's hotels may also be significant because they exemplify styles and types of hotels construction. In their physical form and styles, the island's hotels document seaside resort hotel building of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS—B (Moved Buildings): The moving of buildings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not uncommon on Block Island. For several reasons, it was often more economical to move rather demolish or rebuild existing structures. The island has been chronically short of building materials (except fieldstone) since shortly after European settlement began. By the 1870s building materials were necessarily imported to the island via ferry, an expensive trip, making existing buildings (even if temporarily unsuitable) a valuable resource, not to be discarded easily. In addition, Block Island's development into a resort occurred over a brief time; levels of construction activity from the 1870s to the 1910s were intense, creating a similarly intense demand for materials and space; in such a situation, the cost of moving a building to a more suitable location could be easily justified. If a building was moved during its period of significance and acquired further significance after its move, it may still be eligible for the National Register.

LEVEL OF EVALUATION: Examples of this property type will be evaluated in a local context. The Rhode

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Island Historical Preservation Plan (1995) establishes contexts for evaluation whose spatial component for historic above-ground resources is determined by community and neighborhood boundaries. While there are exceptions, properties are ordinarily evaluated in a local context and are measured against other similar properties within town, city, and neighborhood boundaries.

It is possible that in the future examples of this property type may be evaluated in a statewide context as well. The development of seaside resorts is an important theme in the history of many of the state's coastal communities, a theme which has been studied in a local context for many communities, but which has not yet been studied in a regional or state context. It is known that several communities once had substantial numbers of large nineteenth and twentieth century hotels, akin to Block Island's. Most of these have been demolished, following changes in fashion, two major twentieth-century hurricanes, and later development. Block Island's hotels, here considered in a local context, may have additional significance as rare survivors of a once-larger class existing around the state.

KNOWN RELATED PROPERTIES: Several properties of this type are known and recorded. Those marked with an asterisk are already listed in the National Register.

Plat/lot

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 5.69-1 | Narragansett Hotel (1890s et seq), earlier the Lake Shore Dining Hall |
| 5.113 | Hygeia House (1885) |
| 6.1 | *Woonsocket House (c. 1820, 1871), now the Block Island Historical Society |
| 6.107 | *Pequot House (1879) |
| 6.108 | *New Shoreham House (1875) |
| 6.117.2 | *New National Hotel (1903) |
| 6.143 | *Surf Hotel (1873, 1884, 1888) |
| 6.155 | *Harbor Cottage (c. 1880, 1887) |

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- 7.27 *Manisses Hotel (1876)
- 8.84 *Spring House (1852, c. 1872)
- 8.258 *Norwich House (1878), now Atlantic Inn

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS:

INTEGRITY: In general, to be eligible for the National Register, a hotel must retain sufficient integrity to illustrate in physical form its significance.

Integrity of setting and location are generally expected and will enhance significance, but moved buildings may be eligible if the move occurred during the period of significance and if the property acquired significance after its move.

As commercial buildings that must meet the demands of a marketplace to survive, hotels will of necessity be altered throughout their history to accommodate changing demands of patrons. It is not expected that hotels will necessarily retain integrity in their floor plans or interior finishes. Most of Block Island's historic hotels, for example, were constructed with shared bathrooms on their guest floors; to accommodate market demands, private baths are now required and have been added to many of the hotels. Likewise, kitchen spaces are likely to have been substantially altered. Hotels will be considered sufficiently well preserved to meet the registration requirements if they retain in their exterior form, materials, and design the identifying characteristics of a hotel; if they retain some aspects of their original division of function within the building, for example, the division between public spaces on the first floor and private rooms on the upper floors.

ASSOCIATIVE QUALITIES AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

To be eligible under Criterion A, a hotel will exhibit in its history some aspect of the development of Block Island as a summer resort in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. If eligible under Entertainment/Recreation, the hotel's history will demonstrate some aspect of the development and practice of leisure activities associated with the seaside visits. If eligible under Architecture, the hotel's physical form or style will illustrate seaside resort architecture of its period.

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To be eligible under Criterion C, a hotel will be a typical or fine example of hotel architecture. A hotel may be eligible as a typical example of a larger group. The nomination for such a hotel will identify and describe the larger group and explain how the nominated example typifies the class. When eligible as a particularly fine example of hotel architecture, the nomination will identify and demonstrate the superior architectural value of the nominated hotel, distinguishing it from others by its greater beauty and sophistication.

As part of a district: A hotel may be a contributing component of a larger district. As important features of a larger community which developed over time, a hotel may make a contribution to the historic character of a district even if it is not individually eligible. To make such a contribution, the hotel must have been constructed during the district's period of significance.

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G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The Block Island survey was conducted by locating each building and structure on the island. Each property was photographed and recorded on a standard historic building data sheet, which includes places to note physical characteristics of the property, and its use, condition, and architectural style or period. Historical information, usually not available on the site, is obtained during subsequent research and added to the data sheet. Materials gathered by the Block Island Historical Society, including extensive deed research, genealogical materials, and research in primary sources such as newspapers, were then incorporated into the survey data. Finally, this written report is prepared to provide a context for evaluating the historical and architectural significance of properties in the survey area. Data sheets are kept at the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission's office (150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903) and may be consulted there.

The significance of each surveyed property is evaluated in a preliminary fashion by Commission staff. Properties which appear to meet the criteria for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are identified for further study and review. Though all aspects of local history are investigated to develop an adequate context for evaluation, the emphasis of the surveys is on identifying existing historic properties in anticipation of developing strategies for their preservation.

The survey was conducted by a qualified architectural historian; its results were reviewed by qualified historians, architectural historians, archaeologists, and architects. Historic contexts are defined by the process outlined in Rhode Island Historical Preservation Plan (1995). The typology of properties is based on historic function; a standard list of 21 property types is used throughout the state for all contexts. Only a subset (hotels) of one type (collective residential buildings) is described and evaluated here. Other property types for Block Island may be evaluated in the future. The requirements for integrity are based on knowledge of the condition of existing properties, as all properties included in the geographical limits of the context were examined prior to evaluation.

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H. Major Bibliographical References

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