

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	FEB 6 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:
Rosecliff

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Oelrichs (Hermann) House; Monroe (J. Edgar) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Bellevue Avenue, east side, south of Marine Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Newport

STATE: Rhode Island, 02840 CODE: 44 COUNTY: Newport CODE: 005

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>House-museum</u>

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
The Preservation Society of Newport County

STREET AND NUMBER:
37 Touro Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Newport

STATE:
Rhode Island, 02840 CODE: 44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
Broadway

CITY OR TOWN:
Newport

STATE:
Rhode Island, 02840 CODE: 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Not so represented

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

STATE:
COUNTY:
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This pleasure pavilion for summer entertaining (pointedly, no adequate heating was ever planned for other seasons) was designed by McKim, Mead & White for Mrs. Hermann Oelrichs and completed in 1902-1903. It is at the east (ocean) end of a long grassed lot, screened by trees on its sides, which runs from Bellevue Avenue to the coastline cliffs. Placed upon a white stone basement well sunk into the ground, the house is H-shaped (the cross-bar quite extended in length) and is of two apparent storeys in height; a large penthouse for servants is concealed behind a balustrade. Construction is of steel and timber framing, brick-filled; and exterior facing is of white moulded terra cotta intended to give the effect of polished carved marble. Black-painted wrought iron is used for a glazed ornamental entrance marquise with hanging lanterns, for window grilles and for a southern stair-landing balcony. The somewhat gay and lively, but nevertheless formalised and academic, exterior architectural detailing and rhythms of the ground floor are clearly copied from those of Louis XIV's Grand Trianon at Versailles. The ground floor at Rosecliff is that of architectural parade, both inside and out, even though a floor above was required for bedroom accommodations. The latter, however, has been made quite subordinate on the exterior--treated almost as a continuous attic--especially as the Grand Trianon has no upper façade to copy or adapt.

A long U-shaped drive leads from Bellevue Avenue to and across the west, or entrance, front of the house, which is eleven bays long. At the centre the façade is indented, to a width of five bays and a depth of three, around a paved and green-planted garden court or terrace. (A small circular pool with a fountain is across the drive from this, to the west; there is no other ornamental landscaping, though much was at first intended.) Opening on this court are the five floor-length, round-headed windows of the main salon. The three central ones have a shallow portico-like enframing with four pairs of fluted Ionic columns. Four low plinths above the columns carry sculptured putti. All other first-storey openings around the house are enframed instead by fluted Ionic pilasters and have foliate swags in the spandrels--except for some minor flat-topped windows in the end bays which have wreathed cartouches in panels above them. On this west front the three northern bays filling the foot of the "H" have one central round-headed window and two smaller ones of the type just mentioned. This treatment is repeated in the south foot of the "H;" but here the central opening forms the main entrance, with double doors of plate glass and iron grillework, sheltered by a bracketed marquise of the same materials. On the ocean front a balustraded terrace with steps to a small lawn is brought well out from the house, whose centre here is indented to a depth of only one bay. The end elevations are each of eight bays, and at the south end there is a two-storey rectangular projection taking up three of these and containing the main stair with its tall, balconied window which rises through the upper floor-level and is crowned by a cartouche.

(See Continuation Sheets.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - B72

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	SEP 6 1972

(Number all entries)

7. Description.

The second floor ~~E3~~ has much less height than the first one and is much more modest in architectural treatment. The short casement windows are all rectangular, with moulded and slightly-eared architraves, and are all centred above the larger openings below. Short, fluted Composite pilasters held close to the wall surface repeat the placement of columns and pilasters below and support an eaves cornice, above which runs a roof balustrade which permits neither penthouse nor chimneys to be seen.

Entering under the marquise at the south-east corner, one passes into a large vestibule and stair-hall area floored in marble and divided by a screen-wall with tall openings in a Palladian-window arrangement separated by piers and columns. Wall and cornice ornamentation in this area is of moulded plaster in a very adorned neo-classical style, with niches and oculi for urns etc. East of the dividing screen the grand stair sweeps up: its first flight protrudes much into the hall, the marble steps very wide at the bottom and with an ogival front curve. Ascending, one reaches the landing with its enormous window; there the stair divides into two narrower, curving runs to reach a second-floor lobby; the whole is railed in wrought iron of elaborate convolution and is reminiscent of stairs in the great Renaissance houses of Paris.

At ground level, to the east of the stair, a large door opens to a reception-room; opposite the stair and to the north is a similar entrance to the great central drawing-room. The reception-room fills the south-east corner of the first floor and has a large, high chimneypiece of sculptured (Caen?) stone set upon a raised hearth platform of marble. Above a high, panelled wainscot rise panelled pilasters with pendant reliefs of foliation; the intervening wall spaces originally contained tapestries but are now hung with brocade. Above an elaborate cornice, with a band of foliate relief below a prominent modillion course, there is a coffered ceiling.

North of the stair and the reception-room, occupying the whole of the five-bay centre of the house and with windows opening onto both the garden court and the seaward terrace, is the drawing-room with its parquet de Versailles floor, highly-worked Louis XV wall treatment of Corinthian pilasters, panels, window and door enframements with surmounting garlands and cartouches. The ceiling is panelled and compartmented in plaster relief, housing a large painted skyscape in its centre and a series of painted medallions of idyllic scenes in its perimeter. The high mantelpiece of white marble at the north end (an organ console, now removed, once filled the corresponding southern embrasure) has a painting of a fête champêtre inset above.

(See Continuation Sheet 2.)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)-2

STATE	Rhode Island	
COUNTY	Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
		APR 6 1973

(Number all entries)

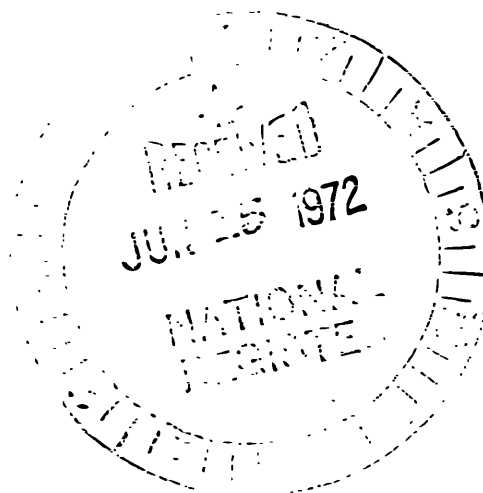
7. Description.

A door to the right of this prominently-ornamented fireplace lets into a sitting-room taking up the north-east corner of this floor. Panelled in oak, this room has a much-carved mantel and chimneybreast adornment, again of chateau style. A door at the left end of the drawing-room opens into an ante-room which has a marble wall-fountain and which leads to the dining-room occupying the north-west corner of the building. This last room of the suite for entertaining has walls with rectangular panels formed by plaster mouldings (the larger panels originally contained painted landscapes), moulded consoles in the surrounds of the windows and supporting the cornice, a very palace-like overmantel arrangement which includes a bust centred before an oval panel.

All of the downstairs salons display chandeliers and wall appliqués incorporating gilt bronze, cut crystal, glass-bead festoons; there are also standing torchères, gilt-bronze hardware, floors of parquetry, mirrored doors. A small section in the middle of the first floor's north end contains service stairs, an elevator, and a pantry which is dependent upon extensive domestic offices located in the basement.

The second floor contains nine bedrooms and eight bathrooms: three bedroom suites (with their little hallways, clothes-presses etc.) are at each end of the house; another three suites are on the seaward side of a long, five-windowed gallery running between the two ends of the house. Décor on this floor is formal but vastly simpler than that below. Rooms have plain or simply-panelled plastered walls in light colours (though some may originally have had toile or damask hangings); door and window enframements are plain; seven of the bedrooms have mantelpieces of various French period styles which are the chief decorative features on this floor.

Old photographs show Rosecliff to have been opulently over-draped and over-furnished. The original furnishings--largely made especially for the house, over-scaled and representing a succession of lavish Italian and French styles--are gone. The furniture and ornaments now seen were all acquired for the house about twenty or twenty-five years ago and, while including a number of antique items, are largely turn-of-the-century reproductions in French XVIII-Century styles and less ponderous.



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1902

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Rosecliff is a fine representative in Newport of the later work of McKim, Mead & White, who had executed earlier residential commissions, and the Casino, there--but all in either the Queen Anne or Colonial Revival styles. This house shows the firm at work in the academic, neo-classical, and often eclectic or adaptive, manner for which they became widely known. (With other documents of the firm, the original drawings for Rosecliff are at the New-York Historical Society.) It is also a good representative of the house of desired formal appearance, planned at the turn of the century especially for frequent and elegant entertaining according to the protocols of the era, and (very often French in architectural style and furnishings) which in the 1900's was wanted in Newport, in New York City, Lenox, Morristown, Chestnut Hill, Lake Forest etc.

Such houses were built less to house a family than to accommodate large numbers of guests, to provide backgrounds for their graceful activities, their gowns and jewels. For this a grand entrance and/or stair, a succession of salons, a dining-room of size, and a ballroom were generally required: these spaces and their contents should be as imposing and beautiful as possible, and so (particularly when one could have a free-standing building) should be the façades encasing them. The façades could both please the arriving guests and also inform the passing public of the grandeur of the occupants and events within.

These requirements are fulfilled at Rosecliff, which may be considered one of the handsomest and least architecturally "inflated" of Newport's summer residences of the gilded age. The exterior impresses one more by its formalised and controlled design (admittedly copied, but from an impeccable predecessor) than by vastness of spread or piling of mass. On the interior, spaces are arranged in a convenient yet formal progression for social events and are well-lighted, high, airy, light-coloured, and decorated with the taste for which Stanford White was famous. Particular mention in this respect should be made of the entrance hall, the central-drawing-room and the dining-room: these are some of the most beautiful interiors of their period in Newport.

(See Continuation Sheet 3.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Downing, Antoinette F., and Scully Vincent J., Jr.: The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952), p. 162.

A Monograph of the Work of McKim, Mead & White, 1879-1915 (New York, 1915), pl. 171-174.

Andrews, Wayne: Architecture in America ... (New York, 1960), pp. 102-103.

---- Architecture, Ambition and Americans (New York, 1955), p. 192.

Toombs, Elizabeth: Rose Cliff, Mrs. Oelrichs' Estate at Newport (in "Town & Country," Vol. ? , No. ? , pp. 19-21. August 31, 1912).

19/307460/1000000
 UTM REF
 12-10-70 0000

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	0 ' "	0 ' "		41 ° 27 ' 54.55" N	71 ° 18 ' 20.23" W	
NE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SE	0 ' "	0 ' "				
SW	0 ' "	0 ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission DATE: Feb. 22, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:
Room 201, 265 Melrose Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island, 02903 CODE: 44

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name Frederick Williams

Title State Liaison Officer

Date June 5, 1972

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert Utley
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 2/6/73

ATTEST:
Wm. M. ...
Keeper of The National Register

Date 1-29-73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 3

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
FEB 6 1973	

(Number all entries)

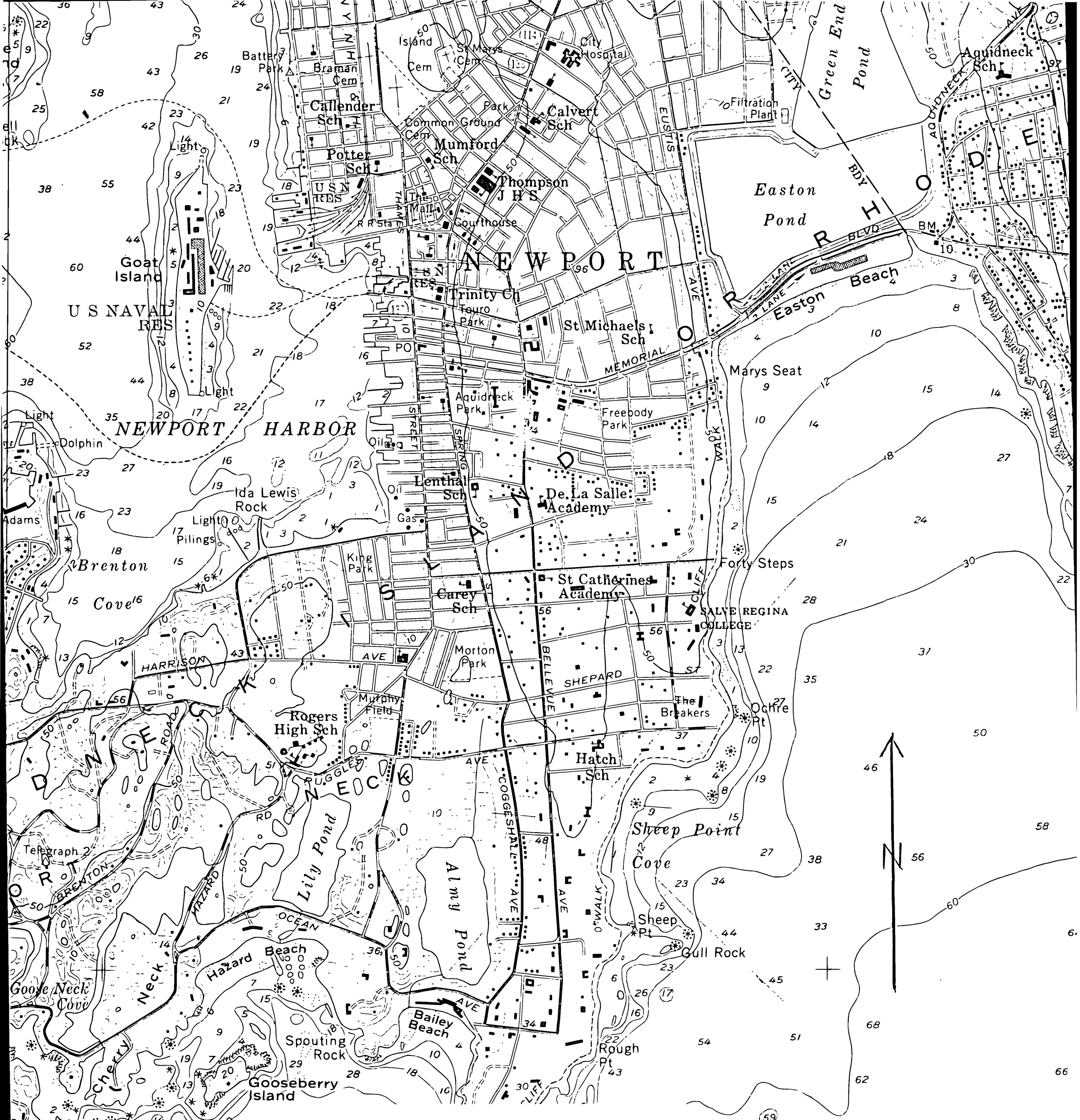
8. Significance.

While the contents of the house to-day are not its original ones, the furniture, rugs, draperies, ornaments etc. now to be seen were carefully chosen and placed to fit and to complement the rooms they fill; and the effect is a very good one--less lavish than formerly, but allowing the interior architecture itself to be better seen and admired.

After a long period of closure (during which time Mrs. Oelrichs, for whom it had been created, died), Rosecliff and its contents were sold at auction in the 1940's. The purchaser was a singing-entertainer not greatly known who exploited her sudden ownership of the house as a piece of personal publicity but who did not occupy, maintain or repair the property. A succeeding owner did undertake repair, complete redecoration and refurnishing in order to use Rosecliff as a summer home. He was killed en route to his initial occupancy; the house was again emptied and again for sale. Around 1949-1950 it was bought by Mr. J. Edgar Monroe, who once more refurbished and refurnished it.

Mr. and Mrs. Monroe used the house in summers until recently, but in 1971 they presented it, with contents and an endowment, to The Preservation Society of Newport County. It will be operated by that group as a house-museum and can also be the setting--because of its great unobstructed drawing-room--for concerts, balls, receptions; its upstairs suites remain in ready condition to house official guests of the society, performing artists etc. Chronologically, Rosecliff postdates the heavily-gilded ostentation of the society's Marble House and The Breakers and relates more closely to The Elms, of 1900, by Horace Trumbauer. But it is not a majestic "hôtel particulier," complete with parterres, as is The Elms. It remains, and can be shown as, what it was intended to be--a glittering pleasure pavilion in the French taste, oriented upon its very fine ocean view.

JUN 15 1972



GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

Latitude: 41° 27' 51.55" N
 Longitude: 71° 18' 20.23" W

