

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

THEME: Architecture

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Newport Historic District

AND/OR COMMON
Newport

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Newport __ NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
STATE Rhode Island __ VICINITY OF 1st
CODE 44 COUNTY Newport CODE 005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME multiple (for information contact The Preservation Society of Newport County)

STREET & NUMBER Washington Square

CITY, TOWN Newport __ VICINITY OF STATE Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Newport City Hall

STREET & NUMBER Washington Square

CITY, TOWN Newport __ VICINITY OF STATE Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey: see individual properties

DATE multiple XX FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress/Annex

CITY, TOWN Washington __ VICINITY OF STATE D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Although most of Newport's distinguished buildings from the early period are from the eighteenth century there are still some important seventeenth-century houses, as well as many post colonial and Greek Revival structures which have survived. Newport is also fortunate in that nine early public buildings remain.

The earliest, the Quaker Meeting House, dates from the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century, six very fine buildings were constructed between 1726 and 1763. Three of them, Trinity Church and the Colony House, both national historic landmarks, and the Sabbatarian Meeting House, now partially gone, are connected with Richard Munday, an architect-builder who worked before 1740. The other three, Redwood Library and Brick Market, both national historic landmarks, and the Touro Synagogue, a national historic site, were built ten to twenty years later by Peter Harrison, one of the most famous and accomplished of America's early architects. St. Paul's Methodist Church on Marlborough Street represents the style of the early nineteenth century as does the Rhode Island Union Bank, built in 1818 and designed by the well known carpenter architect and writer of pattern books, Asher Benjamin.

Newport's unique character as a colonial town lies not only in its public buildings but in the many rows of small houses which survive throughout the old part of the city. These give a coherent architectural background which forms a unified district joining the public buildings and larger houses of the wealthy merchants.

There were about eleven hundred buildings standing in Newport at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. According to records about three hundred houses were destroyed by the British during their occupation. In 1950 over four hundred houses built before 1840 were still standing. Many of these were removed during the urban renewal project of the late 1960's along the waterfront area, but the majority of the buildings outside this section remain. Interest in the preservation of these buildings had led to renewed activity in the restoration of the old section of town.

Some one hundred old houses have survived in the Point section alone. The Jonathan Nichols-Hunter house at 54 Washington Street, also a national historic landmark, the Thomas Robinson House at 64, the Captain John Warren House at 62, as well as the Finch, Rivera, and Dennis houses were all built during the days when Washington Street was called Water Street, the scene of much of Newport's shipping. Houses like the Hunter House once had wharves and shops adjoining as well as extensive gardens. The Captain John Warren House, built shortly after 1736, is typical of the development of the area. The house was originally two stories with one chimney but was remodeled by Captain Warren by 1774, into a central-hall house with two chimneys. It has a gambrel roof with excellent interior panelling and stairway. The fanlight door was added between 1786 and 1822, and the house has been little altered since this time. A similar development also occurred for the Hunter House which is an enlargement of an earlier structure.

(Continued)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1639, 1680, 1740-1775 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Newport, Rhode Island provides unique architectural heritage in the many colonial structures which have survived. In addition to the great numbers of smaller more modest houses, mansions of the wealthy merchants illustrate the prosperity which flourished in the years prior to the Revolution. Buildings designed by Richard Munday, a noted local master carpenter and by Peter Harrison, perhaps the most distinguished and best qualified of colonial architects, gave Newport's Georgian public buildings a high rank among the most advanced and academic in style of those built in the colonies during the eighteenth century. In addition to the many outstanding individual examples of Georgian design, scores of smaller dwellings line the streets of the old town, some well maintained and others rundown. None are distinguished in design or detail but all are harmonious in scale and materials. In mass, scale and texture, the physical evidence of Newport places it as near to the eighteenth century as to our own.

HISTORY

Newport was founded in May 1639 by a small band of men under the leadership of John Clarke and William Coddington, from Massachusetts. Early industries were farming, fishing, and shipbuilding. By 1680 Newport had become a thriving seaport town of some 400 houses and had a large-scale trade with the middle and southern colonies, the West Indies, and Europe. At the beginning of the eighteenth century Rhode Island was more involved than any other colonies with the African slave trade, and Newport became the chief New England slave center. Many fortunes were amassed in the slave trade. Fifty or sixty Newport vessels were engaged in this traffic and their owners were among the leading merchants of the city so that by mid-century, Newport was the most prosperous seaport on the eastern coast. Craftsmen produced the best furniture, silver, pewter and clocks which were exported to other colonies as well as providing comfort for the wealthy of the city.

By 1761 Newport had 888 dwelling houses and 439 warehouses and stores. Newport's era of greatest prosperity was from 1740 to 1775, and numerous surviving structures date from these golden years.

This prosperous development, however, was completely undermined by the outbreak of the Revolution. On December 8, 1776, the British army, under General Henry Clinton, occupied Newport and retained possession until October 25, 1779. The city's population declined from 9,209 in 1774 to 5,229 by 1776. By 1784 it amounted to only 4000. Under the pressure of the American blockade, house after house was torn down by the British to meet the need for firewood, until

(Continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Downing, Antoinette F., and Scully, Vincent J. Jr., The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915, revised edition, New York, 1967.
 Morrison, Hugh, Early American Architecture, New York, 1952.
 Randall, Anne, Newport, A Tour Guide, Newport, Rhode Island, 1970.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 250

UTM REFERENCES

A	19	307000	4596590	B	19	307360	4594490
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	19	306160	4594460	D	19	306120	4596520
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Patricia Heintzelman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project;
original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1968

ORGANIZATION	DATE
<u>Historic Sites Survey</u>	<u>October 1975</u>
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
<u>1100 L Street NW.</u>	<u>202-523-5464</u>
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
<u>Washington</u>	<u>D.C. 20240</u>

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

Landmark
 Designated: Nov. 24, 1968
 date
Boundary Certified:
George F. Emery
April 10, 1978

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

[Handwritten Signature]
 DATE 4/29/79

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Historic houses line the crooked old Shipwrights Street now called Bridge. In 1800 twenty-one sea captains lived on Bridge Street where earlier Townsends and Goddards lived and made their furniture. Christopher and Job Townsend's houses are both still standing at Numbers 72 and 19. Number 25 Bridge Street, built before 1727, was enlarged and altered sometime between 1736 and the Revolution. It is now a two-story, hip-roofed, square house with a central hallway and two chimneys. The stairway has twisted balusters, and the parlors have panelling which dates back as far as 1730. The former doorway had a pineapple-crowned pediment, a design encouraged by Newport's trade with the West Indies and found on many doors including the Colony House and the Hunter House. The later two still remain but the one at Number 25 Bridge Street was replaced in 1800 with a pediment from Bristol.

Public and religious buildings as well as many fine mansions and small houses are found in the central part of Newport as you move inland from the harbor. Among these are the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, and the Vernon House, both national historic landmarks, the Whitehorse Taven, Pitts Head Tavern and the Jireh Bull House, all typical of the larger frame structures of the period.

The Wanton-Layman Hazard House, probably built around 1695, represents the architectural transition from the seventeenth-century to the eighteenth century. While its framing methods illustrate the construction of houses of the early period, the elaboration of structural detail and ornamentation reflects the changes which began early in the eighteenth century and developed into Georgian design of mid-century. The Vernon House also began as an earlier structure from the turn of the century. It was enlarged around 1760 into a formal Georgian mansion of frame construction, rusticated and sanded to imitate ashlar masonry with a wide classic doorway, modillioned and dentiled cornice and a low hipped roof with a flat balustraded deck. The Whitehorse and Pitt's Head Taverns are very characteristic of the larger houses of Newport with their gambrel roofs, plain pedimented doors and clapboarded walls that rise from the sidewalks edge. The Jireh Bull House is another example of this basic style.

Many nameless rows on old streets, built at the sidewalks edge, sometimes side to the street or end to the street; some covered with gable roofs, some with gambrel or gable-on-hip roofs, all frame and clapboard construction and all contributing to the architectural cohesiveness of the district remain in large numbers throughout the area. There are remarkably few modern intrusions in the residential areas and in the pre-1830 business district. The most extensive modern intrusion is along the redeveloped waterfront area. Although the merits of the shops and condominium apartments are a matter of debate, the new construction at least does not disrupt the scale of the area and blends in as far as materials used. A new large motel was built on an island in the middle of Newport Harbor, thus removing a potentially adverse intrusion from

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the historic area. The new buildings in the 1830 business district around Washington Square, although slightly larger in scale do not disrupt the whole to a very great degree.

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some 480 buildings were destroyed. American troops reoccupied Newport on October 26, 1779. The French army arrived at Newport on July 10, 1780 and remained there until June 1781.

With the coming of peace, Newport's former trade failed to revive, and not until the first decade of the nineteenth century did the city slowly begin to recover from the effects of the Revolution. This revival was checked, and the city fell into another decline as a result of the Embargo Acts of 1807 and 1809, and the War of 1812. From 1815 to 1828 Newport remained in a state of suspended animation and it was not until the 1830's that the city again began to prosper. This time its growth was as a summer resort and not as a port, a characteristic still true today.

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The historic buildings are largely concentrated near the waterfront and located within the eighteenth century limits of the town. Part of the harbor waterfront has been the target of extensive demolition projects for urban renewal and is not included in the district boundary. The overall unity of the rest of the area up to the northern border and the more recent commercial development is remarkable. The landmark boundary has been drawn to include almost all of the documented historic structures while excluding all major modern commercial development. The boundary begins at the point where Van Zandt Avenue ends at Newport Harbor, following east along the south edge of Van Zandt to its intersection with Farewell Street, then south along the west edge of Farewell Street to its intersection with Warner Street, then northeast along the rear property lines of buildings on the north side of Warner Street to its intersection with Spruce, then southeast along the rear property lines of buildings on the east side of Spruce Street to West Broadway or Tanner Street, then southwest along the north edge of Tanner to Oak Street, then southeast along the rear property lines of buildings on the east side of Oak to Broadway, then southwest along the north edge of Broadway to Bull Street then southeast along the east edge of Bull Street to Mount Vernon Street, then southwest along the rear of properties on the east of Mount Vernon to Sherman Street, then southeast along the rear of properties on the north of Sherman Street to Whitfield Place, then southwest along the northwest edge of Whitfield Place to Touro Street, then southeast along the eastern edge of Touro Street following as it turns south and becomes Bellevue Avenue to Redwood Street, then following east along the south edge of Redwood along the ^{North} property line of the Redwood Library turning south along its east boundary to Old Beach Road then west along the northern edge of Old Beach Road back to Bellevue Avenue, continuing south along the east edge of Bellevue to William Street, then west along the south edge of William Street to its end at Thomas Street, then south along the east edge of Thomas Street following as it turns west to become Golden Hill Road, continuing west along the north edge of Golden Hill to Spring Street then south along the west edge of Spring Street to Pope Street, then west along the north edge of Pope Street to Thames Street, then north along the west edge of Thames Street to the Brick Market, continuing west, north and east around the Brick Market to include it within the district, then north again along the west edge of Thames Street to Marlborough Street then west along the north edge of Marlborough Street to Frank Corridon Street, then north along the east edge of Corridon Street to Bridge Street, then west along the south edge of Bridge Street to Third Street, then south along the east edge of Third Street of Marsh Street, then west along the north edge of Marsh Street to Washington Street, then north along the west edge of Washington Street to the southern property line of the park between Elm and Bridge Streets, then west along this line to Newport Harbor, then north along the shore of the harbor to the point of beginning, as indicated by the green line on sketch map A.