

III. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

The Seventeenth Century

Newport was founded in May, 1639, by a small band of English settlers who came from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. William Coddington and John Clarke, the group's leaders, came in search of religious liberty following conflict over the Antinomian Movement in Boston. With the aid of Roger Williams, they purchased Aquidneck Island from the Indians, where, along with some thirty others, they established a settlement in Portsmouth. Following the influx of new emigrants under Anne Hutchinson's leadership, the original settlers, who gradually lost political control, decided to resettle on the southern shore of Aquidneck Island in the vicinity of the West Broadway Neighborhood.

As elsewhere in Rhode Island, Newport's government, based upon the separation of church and state, colored local development. Farming, fishing and shipbuilding were the settlement's first industries, but the island's excellent harbor and fertile lands soon attracted men of daring who sought mercantile opportunities as well as religious freedom. In Newport, members of minority religious sects could build their ships and wharves and make their fortunes. By 1639, Marlborough Dock, the town's first wharf, was constructed at the end of Marlborough Street, and Nicholas Easton and William Brenton had built wharves into the cove. Long Wharf, situated at the foot of Washington Square, became a shipping center and, by 1680, "The Proprietors of Long Wharf" had formed to promote the town's maritime prosperity. Shipbuilding in Newport soon became a leading industry; the increasing volume of shipping and commerce fostered rapid growth. During the first forty years of settlement, over four hundred small houses were built in Newport in addition to gristmills and sawmills, tanneries, cooperages, breweries and bakeries. Shopkeepers, shipwrights, housewrights, blacksmiths, masons, cordwainers, mechanics, silversmiths and other artisans were supported by the port's commercial activity.

As in other Rhode Island towns, Newport had no formal plan; its layout and the location of structures were determined by topography, water, convenience and property holdings. Thames

Street, the city's main street, was laid out parallel to the coast, north and south of the "Great Common" (now Washington Square). The development of colonial Newport centered around Washington Square; early settlement was in the vicinity of the Town Spring, behind the site of the Colony House, and near the hide-tanning pits, which followed the stream running down West Broadway and Marlborough Street to Marlborough Dock. Nicholas Easton's house (1639) was located on Farewell Street and William Coddington's house (1641) stood on Marlborough Street opposite Duke Street. A water mill, formerly on Marlborough Street, was erected before 1641, and Newport's first Colony House was built in 1687, nearly fifty years after settlement, on the site of the present building.

Newport's most important surviving seventeenth-century buildings are found in the West Broadway Neighborhood. The Meetinghouse of the Society of Friends was built by prominent Quaker merchants in 1699 near the northeast corner of Marlborough and Farewell streets. The central section retains its late medieval, structural framing. In order to accommodate the increasing number of Quakers who came to Newport from all over New England for their yearly meeting, the building was enlarged in 1705, 1729, 1807, 1858 and 1867. The recently completed restoration reflects its appearance from 1807 to 1857 (Figure 4). The Meetinghouse Museum, containing exhibits explaining the building's restoration and Quaker history, serves as a reminder of the Quakers' leading role in the development of Newport and of their important contributions throughout the New England region.

Two other seventeenth-century buildings in the West Broadway Neighborhood are the White Horse Tavern (Figure 5), located on the northwest corner of Marlborough and Farewell streets, and the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House at 17 Broadway. The original, two-room, two-story section of the White Horse Tavern was probably built before 1673. William Mayes, Sr. was granted a license to operate a tavern as early as 1687, and, during the eighteenth century, the tavern became an active center for civic affairs. By 1708, Town Council dinners were held there and the General Assembly met in the tavern while the Colony House was being built. Around 1780, the building was widened and the present, broad, gambrel roof was added by Walter Nichols, the tavern's owner during the Revolutionary era.

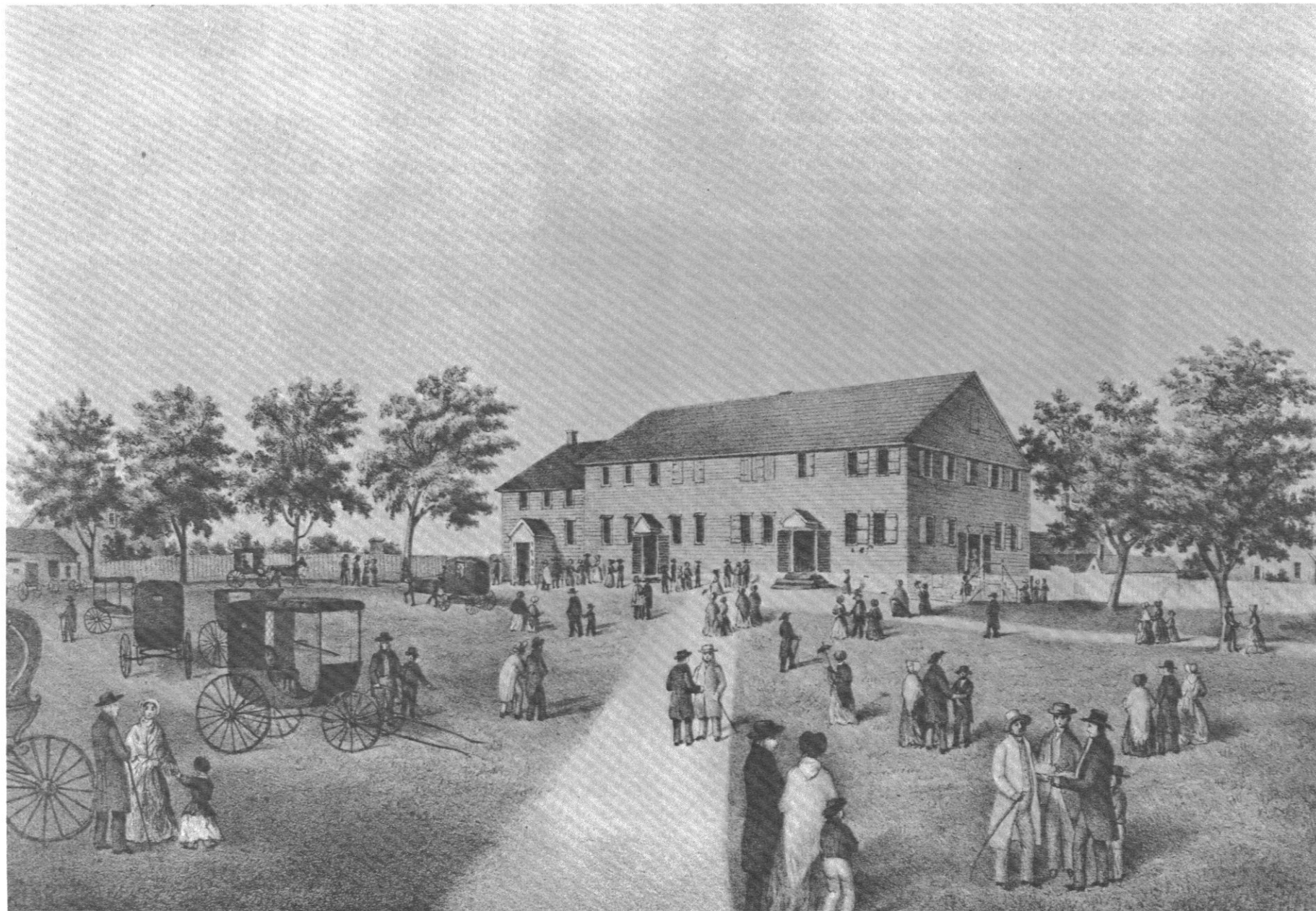


Figure 4: The Meetinghouse of the Society of Friends, 1699, alterations through 1867; lithograph, 1857; 30 Marlborough Street.

The Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House (Figure 6) was probably built just before 1700 by Stephen Mumford. This two-and-a-half-story, seventeenth-century house, built on a typical two-room, center-chimney plan with a steeply pitched, gable roof, is one of Newport's finest examples of late medieval building construction. In 1724, the house was sold to Richard Ward, who later became governor, and, in 1750, it was purchased by Martin Howard, Jr., a loyalist pamphleteer. Howard fled in August, 1765, when an angry mob attacked his house, breaking windows and interior furnishings, and Howard was hung in effigy along with Dr. Thomas Moffatt and the Stamp Master, Augustus Johnston. During the Revolution, when the Wanton family owned the house, it was a center of social life while French allies were stationed in Newport. In the course of restoring the house as a museum, architectural elements from each period were retained. Of great interest is the south parlor's early eighteenth-century paneling, behind which is the original seventeenth-century fireplace. The front doorway was probably added by the Wanton family following their purchase of the property after the Stamp Act riot.



Figure 6: Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, before 1700, altered c. 1765; 17 Broadway.

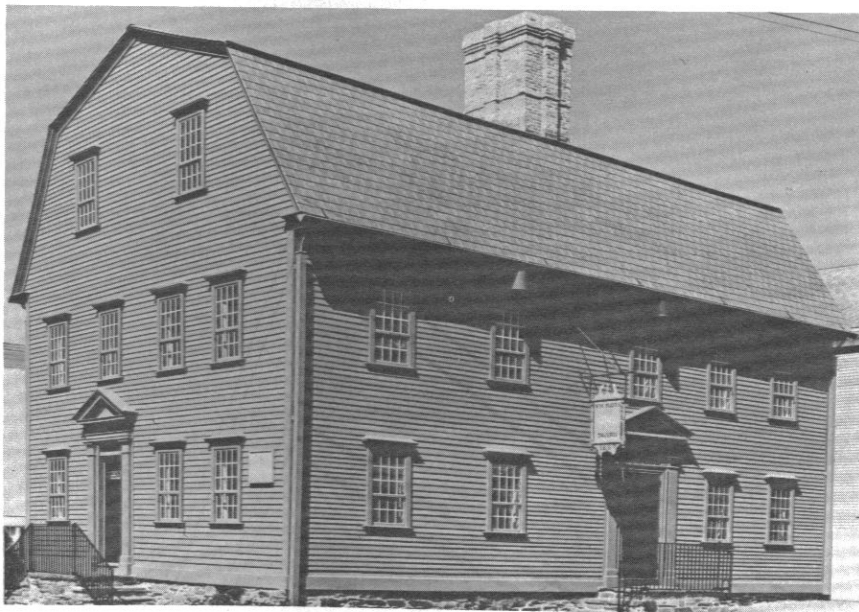


Figure 5: White Horse Tavern, before 1673, altered c. 1780; 26 Marlborough St.

The Eighteenth Century

Although the West Broadway Neighborhood was the focal point of the Newport settlement in the seventeenth century, it was overshadowed by the adjacent harbor-side trading center in the eighteenth century, during which time Newport was one of the most prosperous ports in the colonies. Fortunes were made by expanded coastal and foreign trade in sugar, rum, salt, logwood, hemp, fish, flour, rice, flaxseed, whale oil and spermaceti candles. The "triangular" slave trade was also very profitable. Slaves exported from the West Coast of Africa were sold to West Indian sugar plantations from which molasses, in turn, was shipped to New England for making rum. Wealthy Newporters also bought slaves to work on their Aquidneck Island and South County farms, which produced exports for the southern colonies, the West Indies and Europe. Slaves were sold for this purpose outside Brick Market in Washington Square and at another slave market on the northeast corner of North Baptist and Thames streets.



Figure 7: The John Stevens Shop, 1705; 29 Thames Street.

Newport's commercial prosperity was dependent upon many skills, including those of seamen, shipwrights and dockworkers, ironmongers, leather tanners, cordwainers, candle makers and distillers. Another important component was the group of shops along Thames Street in which imported goods were sold. On Calender Avenue and Farewell Street, rope was made in long sheds known as ropewalks, and hides were tanned in pits formerly located along West Broadway. Since 1705, the John Stevens Shop (Figure 7), located at 29 Thames Street in the northern Thames Street residential area, has produced fine stone cutting and lettering on signs and gravestones. The latter may be seen in Newport's Common Burial-Ground. Of special interest are the gravestones carved by Zango Stevens, a Black slave who had been trained in the shop. This eighteenth-century craft tradition continues today, and the shop, under the direction of John Benson, its present owner, has executed fine lettering for contemporary stone buildings and monuments, including the John F. Kennedy Memorial in Arlington National Cemetery. The late eighteenth-century house of another important craftsman, the goldsmith William

Hookey, stands at 6 Coddington Street in the northern Thames Street residential area.

In the era of Newport's great mid-eighteenth-century prosperity, local leaders directed their energies and wealth towards creating civic architecture of lasting distinction. In Washington Square, the Colony House (1739) and Brick Market (1762) are well known landmarks. The Colony House (Figure 8), designed by the carpenter-builder Richard Munday, housed annual sessions of the colonial and, later, the state government; there, court was held and town meetings were assembled. For over a century and a half, the results of elections were announced and celebrated at this site. It was also the scene for significant events in American Revolutionary history. The Declaration of Independence was ratified in the Colony House on July 18, 1776, and proclaimed from the balcony by Major John Handy on July 20. During the Revolution, British troops used the building for barracks and it was later used by the French as a hospital. In 1781, the French General Rochambeau honored General George Washington at a large dinner there; it was also in this building that the first Catholic mass in Rhode Island was celebrated by the chaplain of the French troops. In 1790, a convention met in the Colony House to ratify the Constitution of the United States. The restoration of the Colony House was completed in 1932 under the direction of Norman M. Isham. In 1972, some exterior and interior renovation was undertaken by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission with a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the National Park Service supplied another grant for further interior renovation. Suitable furnishings are being provided by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

The Brick Market (Figure 9), located at the opposite end of Washington Square, was built for a market house and stores for dry goods from plans drawn by the Newport merchant Peter Harrison, probably the most gifted amateur architect in the colonies. He also designed the Redwood Library (1748), located at 50 Bellevue Avenue, and the Touro Synagogue (1759) at 72 Touro Street. The market's design, based on Inigo Jones' Old Somerset House in London, as derived from one of the illustrations in Harrison's architectural library, is among the architect's greatest achievements. The first floor was used for a watch house during the Revolution. After

the war, the upper stories were used for a printing office and, from 1793 to 1799, they were rented by Alexander Placide for use as a theater. Part of an original theatrical seascape is intact on the eastern wall. Although less well known, Newport's old jail (1772, enlarged 1800, altered c. 1960) (Figure 10) on Marlborough Street is probably the earliest extant correctional building in New England and remains in use as Newport's Police Headquarters.

Newport's maritime prosperity provided a solid economic base for the seaport's growth, and, by 1759, nearly 1000 structures had been built. According to the 1777 map of Newport prepared by Charles Blaskowitz (Figure 11), intensive development extended around Washington Square, between Thames and Farewell streets and down Marlborough Street, Broadway (formerly Broad Street) and West Broadway (formerly Tanner Street). Kingston Avenue (formerly Spruce Street) was the only street in the West Broadway residential area built up at this time. About twenty houses and garden plots were located there.



Figure 12: Abraham R. Riviera House (Newport National-Old Colony Bank), c. 1722, altered c. 1740 and c. 1950; 8 Washington Square.

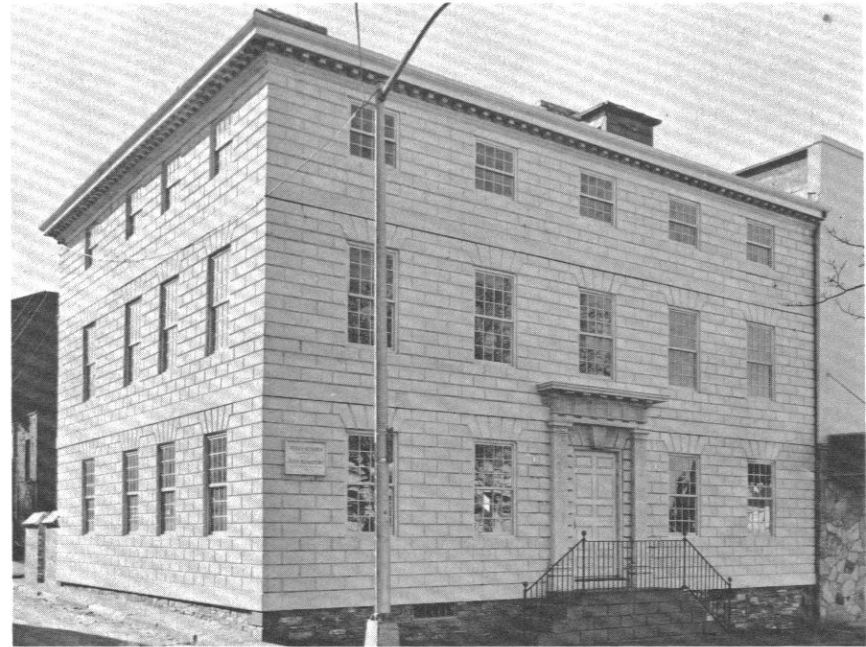


Figure 13: Peter Buliud House (Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry House), before 1757; 29 Touro Street.

A few traces of this era's fine domestic architecture are still found in the West Broadway Neighborhood: the Abraham R. Riviera House (c. 1722, altered c. 1740) (Figure 12), now housing the Newport National-Old Colony Bank, and the Peter Buliud House (before 1757) (Figure 13) are among the last Colonial mansions in Washington Square. The home of Governor William Codding's grandson, John, built about 1730, is another ambitious house which occupies a prominent site on the northeast corner of Marlborough and Thames streets. On a more modest scale is the John Taylor House (Lieutenant Etienne Decatur House) (c. 1715) at 19 Charles Street, the home of the French naval officer who was the grandfather of Commodore Stephen Decatur, hero of the War of 1812. This house originally stood south of the Colony House at the head of Washington Square. The Deacon Joseph Pike House (c. 1770) (Figure 14) at 10 Warner Street, a one-and-a-half-story cottage with a gambrel roof, is representative of eighteenth-century housing in the heart of the West Broadway residential area.



Figure 14: Deacon Joseph Pike House, c. 1770, and Peter Knowe House, 1883; photograph, c. 1885; 10 and 12 Warner Street.

The Era of the Revolution

Anti-British sentiment among Newport's wealthy merchants was caused by the aggressive enforcement of strict maritime regulations and tax laws. In July, 1769, the British sloop *Liberty* was set adrift and burned at Long Wharf while on customs patrol in Newport Harbor. The auxiliary boats of the sloop were dragged to the site of Equality Park (Figure 15) and set afire. The park memorializes one of the earliest acts of violence directed at British authority by American colonists seeking to protect their economic and political independence.

In the two decades preceding the Revolution, Newport had been at the height of its commercial and seafaring prosperity; following occupation by British and Hessian troops in 1776, all development ceased throughout the town. During their stay, the British billeted in churches and public buildings, dismantled an estimated 480 structures for firewood and brought a halt to the community's maritime life. Much of the neighborhood's fabric was damaged by the British, including colonial landmarks such as the White Horse Tavern and the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House. Among the trees cut was the "liberty tree" at the corner of Thames and Farewell streets which had been planted to commemorate the repeal of the 1766 Stamp Act. The tree was replaced in April, 1783, and the large "liberty tree" now growing on this site (William Ellery Park) was planted in 1897 (Figure 16).

On July 10, 1780, the arrival of General Rochambeau's French troops boosted the morale of the residents but did not reverse the port's economic decline. Following the return of peace, Newport was incorporated as a city, but the war, conflicting loyalties and a weakened economy had forced many wealthy Newporters to relocate; in consequence, the town meeting form of government was re-established in 1787. After the Revolution, Rhode Island's economic center shifted to Providence which had suffered relatively little during the war, and Newport never regained its former commercial prosperity.

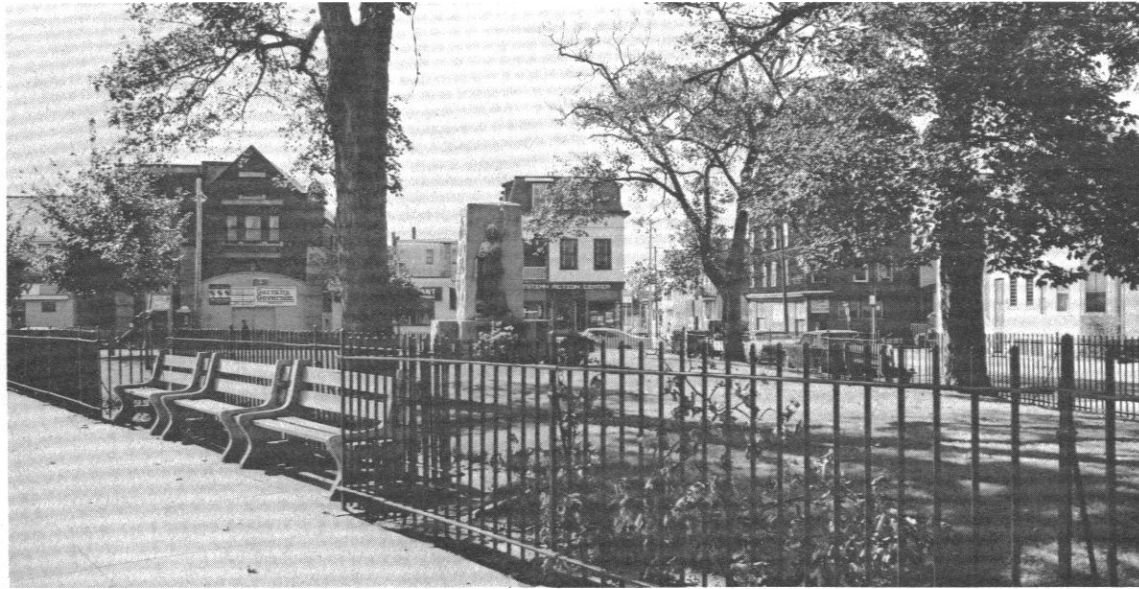


Figure 15: Equality Park, c. 1870; Broadway at Equality Park Place.



Figure 16: William Ellery Park, 1766; photograph, c. 1897; corner of Farewell and Thames streets.

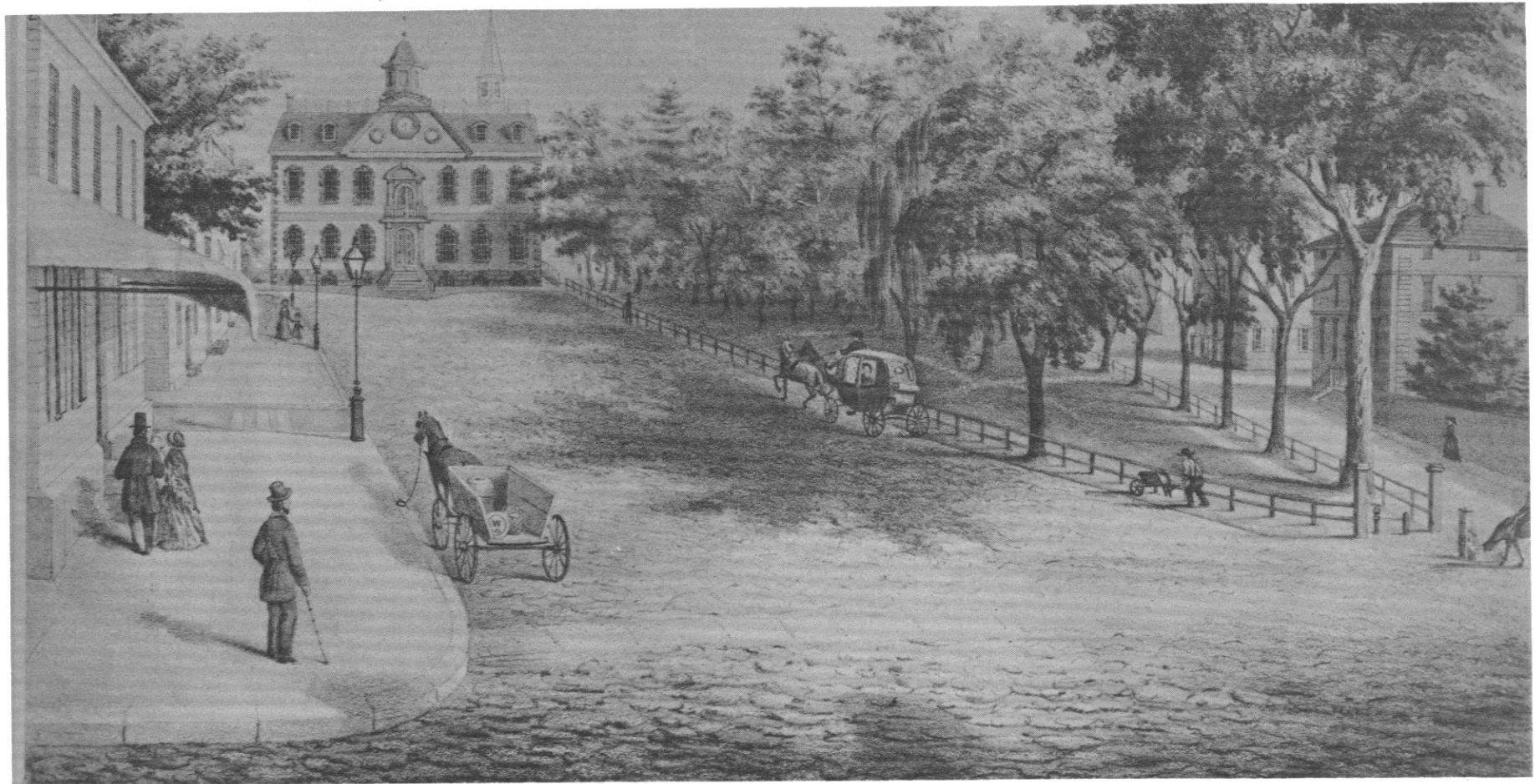


Figure 17: Colony House, 1739, and Parade, 1800; lithograph, 1857; Washington Square.

The Nineteenth Century

Washington Square

In 1800, the Parade (Eisenhower Park) in Washington Square (Figure 17) was laid out with funds raised by public lottery. Its original walks formed three intersecting circles within the triangular green. The space was enclosed by a white picket fence and framed by rows of Lombardy poplars donated by Major Louis Toussard, a

French officer serving with the American Army who was in charge of the enlargements at Fort Adams and the rebuilding of Newport's fortifications following the British departure in 1779. The park made Washington Square a more fashionable residential and business area.

In spite of Newport's economic decline following the Revolution, the town's population loss and its ruined physical condition, banking developed before the turn of the century and a few wealthy

merchants tried to renew the port's commerce. The Rhode Island Bank (est. 1795) and the Newport Bank (est. 1804) were both housed in Washington Square, the former in the Peter Bulioud House and the latter in the Abraham R. Riviera House. During the early nineteenth century, Newport's trading companies sent their ships to Sweden and Russia for iron, to Java for coffee and to China for tea, silks and nankeens (a durable, brownish-yellow cotton fabric). In addition, the African slave trade resumed between 1804 and 1807, although it had been illegal in Rhode Island since 1787. The profits realized by these commercial ventures were stopped by the Jeffersonian Embargo of 1807 which prohibited American ships from embarking for foreign ports in order to force the withdrawal of French and British restrictions on United States trade during the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. Shortly thereafter, the War of 1812 destroyed Newport's maritime economy once again.



Figure 18: Joseph Rogers House (Headquarters for The Preservation Society of Newport County), c. 1790; 37 Touro Street.

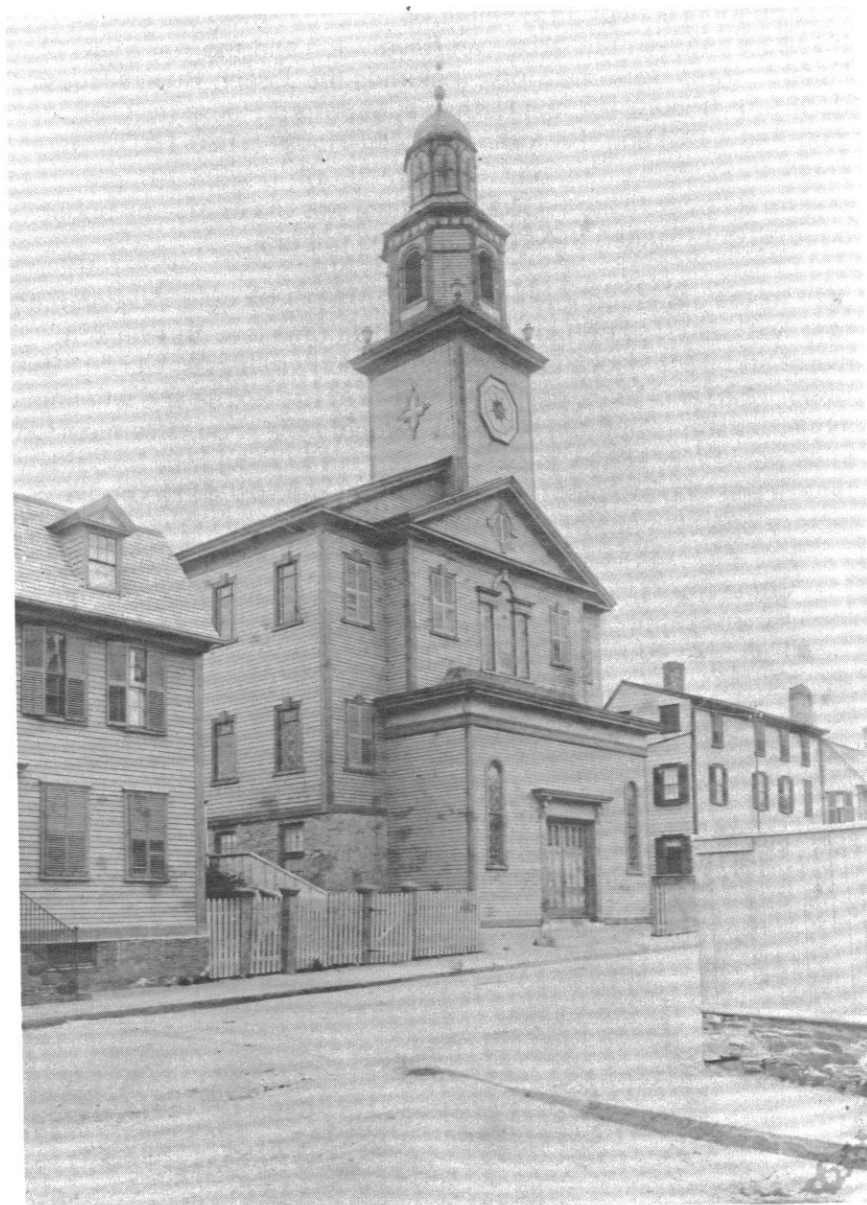


Figure 19: St. Paul's Methodist Church (St. Paul's United Methodist Church), 1806, altered c. 1842, 1881 and 1930, addition c. 1960; photograph, 1922; 12 Marlborough Street.

Building activity in Washington Square revived somewhat in the years between the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Federal, three-story mansions, including the Joseph Rogers House (c. 1790) (Figure 18), the Nathaniel Mumford House (c. 1796, demolished 1920) and the Joshua Wilbour House (1800-1802), were erected. St. Paul's Methodist Church (1806) (Figure 19), distinguished by delicate Federal detailing, was the only large public building constructed in Newport during this era.

In the decade following the War of 1812, Newport's economic base was weak: shipbuilding was at an all-time low, foreign commerce and trade slackened and building activity almost ceased. Between 1825 and 1845, new investments in the textile and whaling industries stimulated the economy temporarily. Four steam cotton mills were built, eleven ships were active in whaling and, for some time, a weaving establishment, a whale-oil refinery and a candle factory operated out of the Colony House.

Some fine Greek Revival buildings were constructed during this era. In Washington Square, the Levi Gale House (1834) and Zion Episcopal Church (1835) (Figure 20), both designed by Russell Warren, are excellent examples. The former, an imposing three-story residence with ornate wood detailing, was built at the head of the Parade (moved to 85 Touro Street in 1925); the latter, at 49 Touro Street, is a well proportioned, pedimented temple with an Ionic portico which has, unfortunately, been extensively remodeled. Several residences in the West Broadway Neighborhood were built in the Greek Revival style; the most notable of these was the William C. Irish House (c. 1845) (Figure 21) at 40 Charles Street.

In 1818, Oliver Hazard Perry, hero of the Battle of Lake Erie in the War of 1812, bought the Peter Buliud House on Washington Square. To honor the Commodore, P. C. Shanahan named his elegant Victorian hotel the Perry House (Figure 22) when it opened in 1865 adjacent to the Buliud House, and, in 1882, the people of Newport resolved to erect the commemorative statue of Perry situated at the foot of the park.

From the early 1850s to the turn of the century, the Parade underwent numerous changes in its layout and landscaping, including the redesign of walks, the placement of elm trees and flower

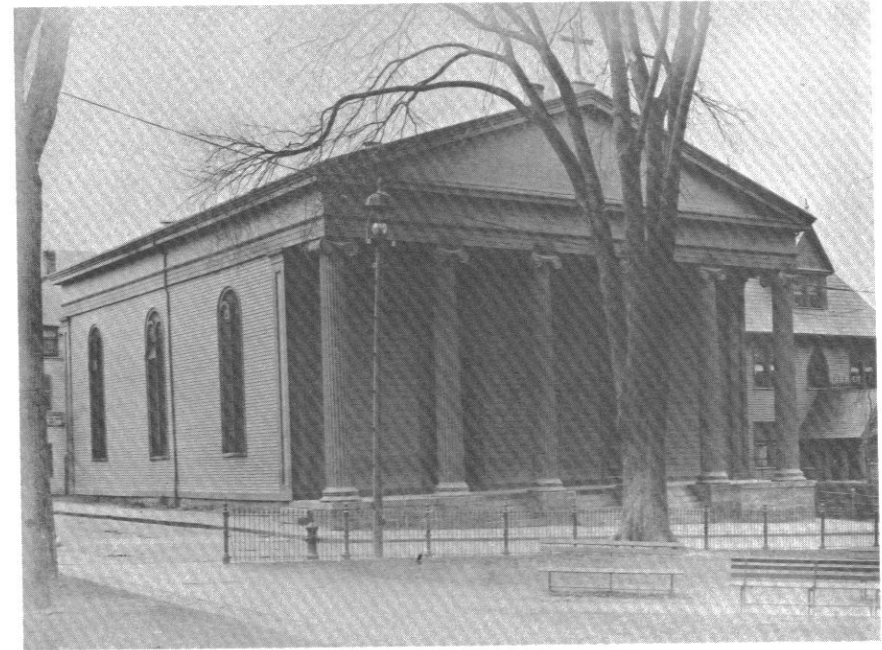


Figure 20: Zion Episcopal Church (Jane Pickens Theatre), 1835, alterations through 1976; photograph, c. 1895; 49 Touro Street.

beds and the installation of iron fences, benches, a fountain and a gazebo (Figure 23). In the late nineteenth century, the construction of new buildings and the commercial re-use of older ones set the precedent for Washington Square's redevelopment as a strictly commercial and civic area in the twentieth century.

West Broadway Residential Area

Much of the West Broadway Neighborhood remained open land during the first half of the nineteenth century. Isaac Gould, a merchant-tailor whose shop was south of Brick Market in Washington Square, owned a large tract between Pond Avenue and Gould Street. Stephen T. Northam, another wealthy merchant, owned much of the northern half of the block bounded by Warner Street, Tilden Avenue, West Broadway and Callender Avenue; and the leather dresser John J. Bush owned a thin strip of land between Callender and Kingston avenues. The Society of Friends owned



Figure 21: William C. Irish House, c. 1840; 40 Charles Street.

most of the block bounded by Tilden Avenue (formerly Green Lane), Warner, Farewell and Marlborough streets and West Broadway, just beyond their meetinghouse. (Figure 24.)

During this era, land in the neighborhood was used for farming, slaughterhouses, small industries and housing. Small market gardens, between two and three acres in size, were cultivated by farmers such as William H. Read, Elijah Sherman and David Stewart. John H. Stoddard, a butcher, owned land between Johnson and Heath courts east of Kingston Avenue, and Nicholas White, a grocer, built a house on Tilden Avenue facing the Burial Ground of the Society of Friends. Dye houses and leather tanneries operated along West Broadway, and William T. Tilley and Robert M. Simmons owned ropewalks specializing in "white and tarred rope" on Callender Avenue. The only public buildings in the area were a

school (Figure 25), on the eastern side of Farewell Street opposite North Baptist Street, and a firehouse on West Broadway.

The West Broadway residential area's rapid physical growth occurred at mid-century during Newport's flowering as a summer resort. The town's picturesque scenery, fine climate, beaches and pleasant social life had drawn visitors since the eighteenth century, and, by the 1820s, hotels were being built. As Newport's fame grew in the 1840s and 1850s, many socially prominent, well-to-do families chose to construct summer cottages there. Recognizing the resort's bright economic outlook, the Town of Newport was rechartered as a city in May, 1853. Newport prospered once again and its population grew. A construction boom which continued into the twentieth century provided work for laborers, carpenters, masons, painters, roofers and plumbers; clerks and bookkeepers were needed in new stores and offices; hotels and restaurants needed help; stevedores, teamsters and truck drivers moved goods

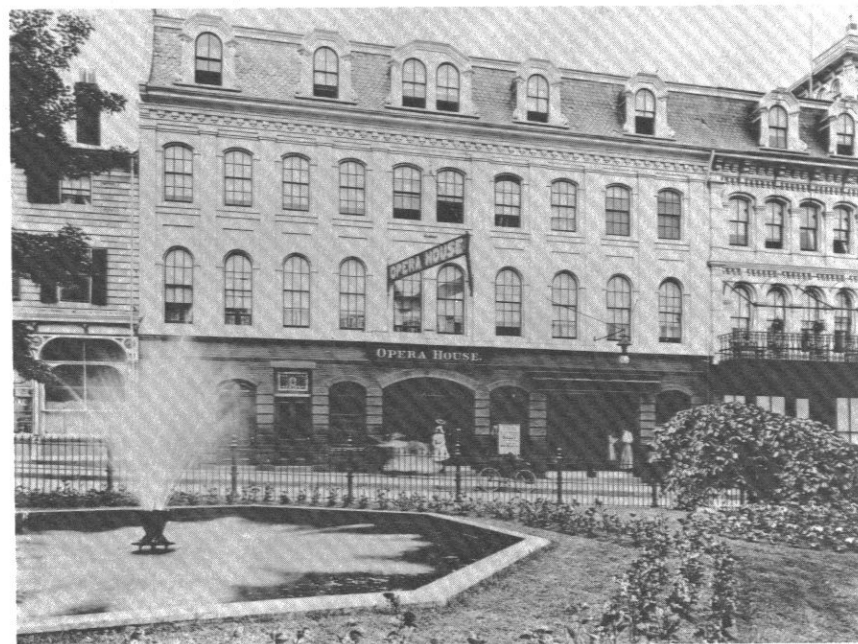


Figure 22: Opera House, 1867, and Perry House Hotel (demolished), 1865; photograph, c. 1910; 21-25 and 13-19 Touro Street



Figure 23: Washington Square, c. 1865; engraving after 1865.

and people across town; in each large household, servants, gardeners, coachmen and grooms were employed and the community hired more firemen, policemen and schoolteachers. The popula-

tion of Newport jumped from 8,010 in 1840 to 14,028 in 1875, and the city's new working class needed places to live as their numbers increased.



Figure 24: Map of the West Broadway Neighborhood by M. Dripps, 1850.

New-Town

The West Broadway residential area, known as "New-Town" in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was developed to serve this rapidly growing segment of the community. New residential construction in New-Town was already underway between 1850 and 1870. During these years, Burnside and Callender avenues, Davis Court and Appleby, Covell, Edward, Feke and White streets were laid out. By 1870, 217 structures had been built in this area, more than twice the number that had existed in 1850 (Figure 26).

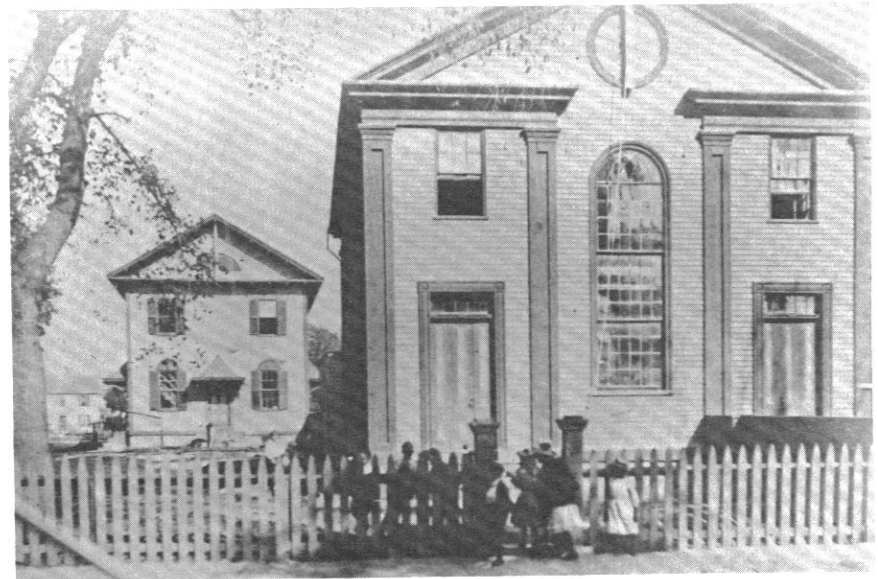


Figure 25: Farewell Street Schoolhouses (Houses), c. 1845, photograph, 1908; buildings moved c. 1909 from the Mumford School site on Farewell Street to 32 and 34 Farewell Street.



Figure 26: Map of the West Broadway Neighborhood by D. G. Beers and Co., 1870.

The *Newport Mercury* of May 18, 1872, publicized Newport's need for modest housing and the financial soundness of speculative building activity:

There is a larger number of mechanics here than we ever recollect of before, at least 2000 more than last year. Most of these are boarding, but many are desirous of going to housekeeping but find it impossible to procure tenements Real estate will now pay a good percentage without trouble of finding tenants and there is every reason to believe that there will be in the future an increase in the valuation of all property in this city.

In response to this line of thought, Patrick Horgan and Constant Smith initiated the development of Pond Avenue in 1873 with "eight small cottages built to rent out (in) all different styles." By that year, the area's narrow street grid and dense residential pattern had been established (Figures 27 and 28). Between 1870 and 1883, an additional fifty houses and buildings were constructed. During this period, frame tenements, such as the Peter Knowe

House (1883) (Figure 14), became common investments. By the end of the century, the neighborhood's current physical density had been reached. Between 1890 and 1900, a few larger homes, such as Timothy B. Murphy's duplex houses (1890-1891) (Figure 29) designed by J. D. Johnston at 2-4 and 6 Equality Park West and the irregularly massed, two-and-a-half-story, Queen Anne houses (c. 1900) (Figure 30) at 40 and 42 Gould Street, were also built for investment in this area.

The typical one- and two-family houses built in New-Town were simple rectangular structures, usually one-and-a-half or two-and-a-half stories in height, gable- or mansard-roofed and unadorned. They were sited close to the sidewalk, either gable end to the street on a side-hall plan or with flanking side gables on a center-hall plan. Clapboarding or shingling were the predominant siding materials, and front porches with modest bracketing were common. Doorway and window moldings were simple and most windows contained two-over-two, double-hung sash. Doors and windows were occasionally accented by clear, frosted or colored panes in various geometric shapes; and window caps, sawn trim

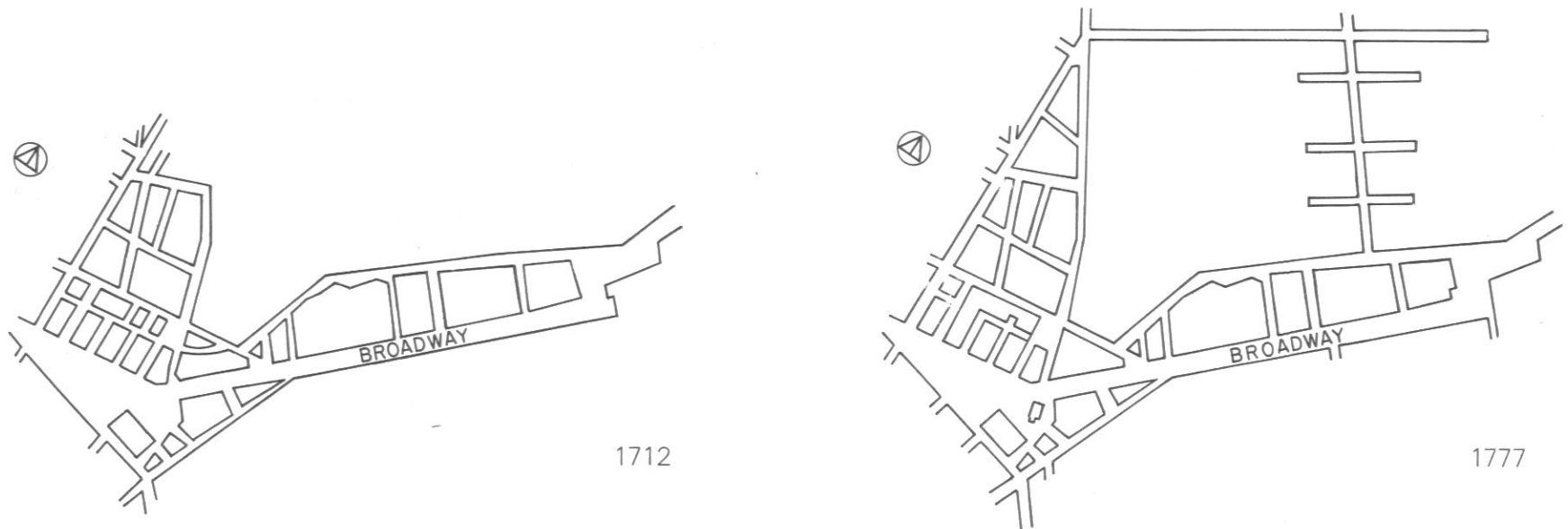


Figure 27: Maps showing the development of the West Broadway Neighborhood in 1712, 1777, 1850 and 1873.



Figure 28: The West Broadway Neighborhood; photograph, c. 1880; northwest view from Broadway at Gould Street.



1850



1873



Figure 29: Timothy B. Murphy House, 1890-1891; 2-4 Equality Park West.

and decorative shingling were applied to the wall fabric of several houses.

The Nicholas Dillon House (c. 1873) (Figure 31) at 18 Pond Avenue is characteristic of a number of architecturally elaborate, late nineteenth-century residences in New-Town. This wood-frame, clapboarded, one-and-a-half-story block with a gable roof nearly fills the lot. The side-hall entrance opens onto a narrow porch which abuts the sidewalk. It is supported by large braced posts, enclosed by a decorative scroll-patterned railing and topped by a flat roof bordered at the cornice by an applied decorative frieze with a jagged edge. Fenestration includes double-hung, two-over-two sash with louvered shutters on the first floor and a tall bay window on the southern elevation. A pair of double-hung, two-over-two windows with arched tops and decorative hood molds are situated in the front gable. Bordering the house's cornice is an applied decorative frieze with a jagged edge. The gable is trimmed by plain bargeboards with a wooden finial and pendant at the peak. Noteworthy interior decorative trim includes a hardwood newel post and handrail along the stairway, an elaborate plaster ceiling in

the front parlor and an ornate mantelpiece. The layout consists of four rooms on the first floor and three rooms on the second. The kitchen is in a rear ell.

Several businesses located in the heart of the West Broadway residential area. Blacksmiths and wheelwrights set up shops (Figure 32) along West Broadway and Edward and Marlborough streets, and, in 1875, Thomas S. Burdick opened a carriage factory in the three-story brick block on the southeast corner of Farewell and Marlborough streets (Figure 33). Gideon Lawton's steam-powered planing mill (c. 1850), which stood on West Broadway between Tilden and Callender avenues, manufactured all sorts of building trim and woodwork and became an important supplier to local contractors who were busy erecting new structures throughout the city. And in 1878, George P. Leonard's Newport Laundry Company, which was on the northeast corner of Pond Avenue and



Figure 30: Patrick Horgan House, c. 1900; 42 Gould Street.

Warner Street, opened a new plant to serve the expanding laundering needs of the resort community. In addition to the major neighborhood enterprises, some modest, home-based businesses, such as dressmaking, coopering, carriage repairing and carpentry, flourished in this area.



Figure 31: Nicholas Dillon House, c. 1873; 18 Pond Avenue.



Figure 32: Charles Stafford Blacksmith Shop, late 19th century; photograph, 1903; demolished; Farewell Street.



Figure 33: Liberty Block, c. 1875, photograph, c. 1895; 11 Farewell Street.



Figure 34: City Hall Square; photograph, 1906; northeast view along Broadway.

Ethnic Diversity

The population of the West Broadway Neighborhood consisted of members of Newport's long standing Black community as well as second-generation natives of English and Irish descent, plus new Irish, Scottish and English immigrants who came to Newport in search of employment. Most of the Blacks were laborers or mechanics of various types. None of the prominent individuals mentioned in Charles A. Battle's *Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island* lived in New-Town. Although the exact number of Blacks who resided or worked in the West Broadway Neighborhood during the late nineteenth century is unknown, two Black churches were established in this area: the African Methodist Episcopal Church (c. 1857), formerly housed at 3 Johnson Court off Kingston Avenue, and the Mt. Olivet Baptist Church (1897), which still occupies the Dr. Henry Jackson House (c. 1840) at 79 Thames Street.

Irish Catholics had settled in Newport before the War of 1812; however, it was not until the 1820s that a substantial number of Irish are known to have lived in Newport, and it was not until 1828 that the first Catholic parish was established. The number of second-generation Irish, English or Scottish who may have resided in the West Broadway Neighborhood in the late nineteenth century has not been exactly determined, but, according to the Newport census of 1870, of the foreign-born residents in Ward Two, there were four hundred Irish, forty-three English and five Scottish. Most of these people held jobs as laborers, gardeners, mechanics or domestic servants.

Many Black and foreign-born families who found their livelihoods in Newport during the middle and late nineteenth century made their homes in New-Town. This neighborhood has become a valuable reminder of their overlooked roles in the city's physical growth and social development during Newport's height as a summer resort.

Broadway-West Broadway Commercial District

Following the development of the West Broadway and Kay-Catherine-Old Beach Road neighborhoods during the 1870s, many

of Broadway's older structures were converted into stores, and new commercial buildings were constructed in response to local residents' rapidly expanding needs for provisions of all types. Broadway soon competed with Thames Street as the focus of the city's retail activity. Prior to that time, rows of small, Colonial and Federal, one- and two-story houses stood along the street. By 1850, a few small businesses had already opened: Israel F. Lake, a grocer, owned the early nineteenth-century structure at Broadway and Equality Park Place, subsequently known as "Lake's Korner," and Jonathan Dame managed a boarding house on the site opposite City Hall. Moses H. Beede, a shoe dealer, and Jonathan J. Bush, a leather dresser, owned business property between Collins and Oak streets. (Figure 26.)

During the late nineteenth century, meat, fish and produce markets, bakeries and confectioneries, fruit stores, dry goods and hardware establishments, pharmacies, furniture emporiums and barber shops opened to serve the surrounding residential areas. To meet the increased need for commercial space, store fronts were added to many old houses along Broadway. In 1882, the *Newport Mercury* described commercial plate-glass windows as "all the rage this season." In 1893, "new plate-glass fronts" were installed in the Edward Stanhope House (1792) at 26-30½ Broadway and in the Charles Spooner House (c. 1850) at 58 Broadway. Late Victorian, three- and four-story buildings heightened Broadway's scale and increased its physical density (Figure 34). The Weaver Block (1892) at 19-23 Broadway, designed by J. D. Johnston, replaced a smaller building which had burned, creating more retail space for the hardware store formerly on that site. The *Newport Mercury* called this simply ornamented, four-story, brick structure the "largest business block of its type in the state." Combinations of commercial and residential uses were common in buildings of all periods on Broadway; in fact, merchants often lived above their places of business. For example, William T. Libby, a baker, lived in the upper floors of his elaborate, three-story, Late Victorian block built in 1893 at 9-11 Broadway.

A few traces of Broadway's heritage of commercial buildings are found between Branch and Oak streets. The streetscape between Washington Square and Marlborough Street also survives;

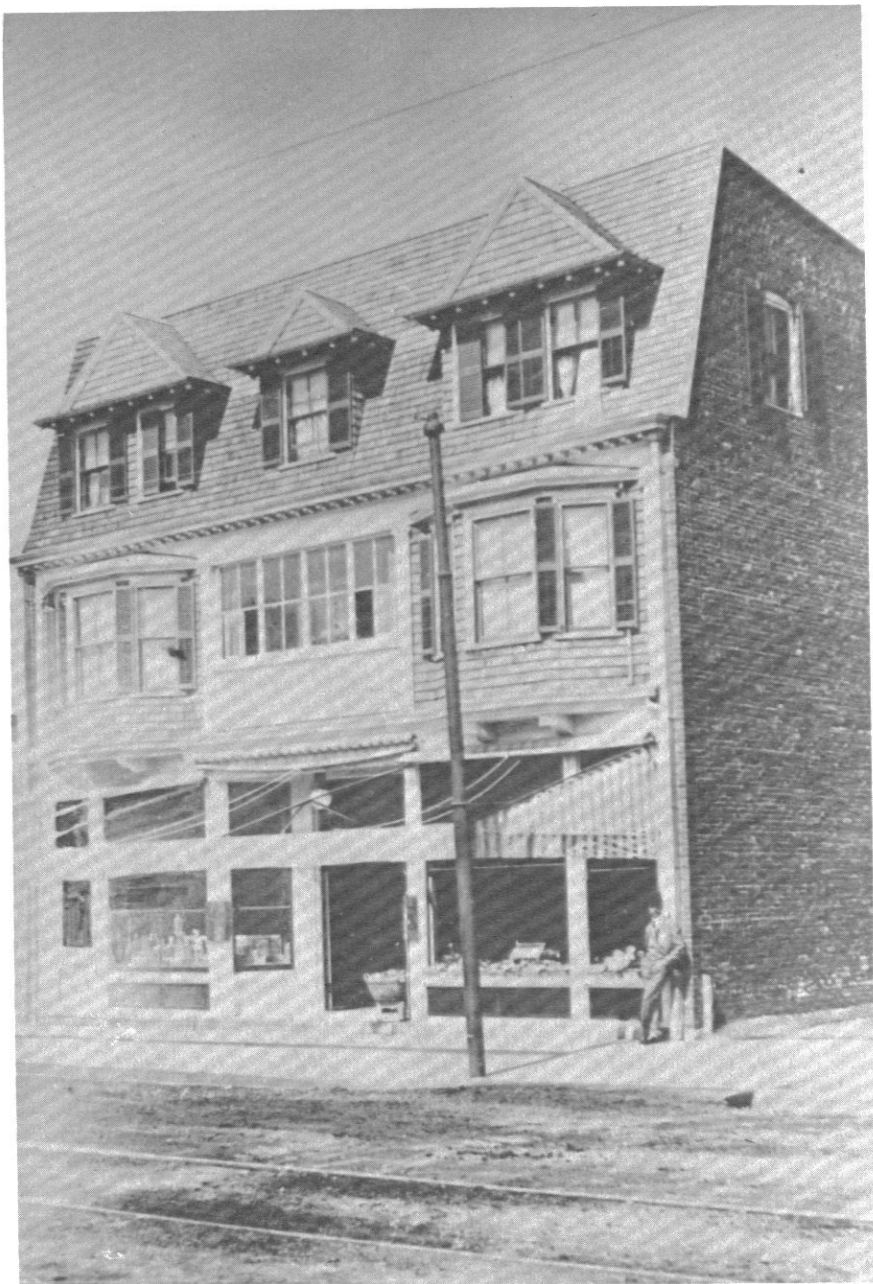


Figure 35: Tisdall Block, c. 1900; photograph, 1903; 130 Broadway.

however, the Victorian fabric of this commercial district is best represented and preserved between Oak Street and Equality Park. This ensemble of buildings (see cover), including such noteworthy examples as the former Tisdall Market (c. 1900) (Figure 35), is Newport's most evocative link with Broadway's late nineteenth-century commercial architecture. Also in this area is a fine Engine House and Ward Room built in 1884 at Equality Park Place. Designed by the locally prominent firm of George C. Mason and Son, this well built structure retains its original brick and granite walls, although the belfry above the entrance tower has been removed.

In the late nineteenth century, the southeast side of Broadway between Bull and Calvert streets became a center for several city institutions because of the area's proximity to various governmental buildings, residential areas and commercial districts. J. D. Johnston was commissioned to design Newport's Second Empire, cut-granite City Hall (Figure 36) at 41 Broadway which was constructed between 1898 and 1900 and remodeled in 1927 after fire destroyed much of its interior. The Newport School Department built a number of structures, east of City Hall on Broadway, in eclectic Victorian styles: the Townsend Industrial School (1893), the Coles Science Lab (1903), the old Rogers High School (1905) and the new auditorium (1922). In 1892, the First Presbyterian Church (Figure 37) was erected at 167 Broadway. Plans for this large masonry building were completed by J. D. Johnston in the Richardsonian Romanesque architectural tradition. Characterized by large curved forms visually unified by stringcourses and parapets of contrasting stone, the building's well preserved fabric is accented by large stained-glass windows which break up its massive form. This building should be regarded as among the finest Late Victorian buildings in the West Broadway Neighborhood.

In contrast to Broadway's busy retail area, nineteenth-century West Broadway was a typical back-street commercial area in which pedestrian traffic was not the key to business success. Businesses needing large working areas and little display space, including a sausage factory, a bakery, a carriage factory and blacksmith and wheelwright shops, located there between modest one- and two-story, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century residences. Most of the plain, wood-frame structures in which these businesses were housed



Figure 36: Newport City Hall, 1898-1900, altered 1927; photograph, c. 1900; 41 Broadway.



Figure 37: First Presbyterian Church, 1892; 167 Broadway.

are no longer standing. Of special interest, however, is the Patrick P. Burke Block (1891), a fine, Late Victorian, Shingle Style building which retains its original store-front windows bordered with colored-glass panes. Built as a neighborhood saloon with living quarters on the upper floors, this is the last structure of its type on West Broadway.

The Twentieth Century

Commercial and Institutional Development

The Newport summer residents and vacationers helped to maintain the city's prosperity into the twentieth century; in addition, the local economy received a major boost from the influx of Army and Navy officers and men, and their families, who lived in Newport from 1945 to 1974 while stationed at the naval base or War College (est. 1884). Distinguished personnel of the armed forces, as well as foreign dignitaries, visited Newport regularly; and crewmen from Allied ships were a common sight throughout the twentieth century. The ongoing presence of a transient military population created a demand for goods and services which

gradually altered the fabric of the West Broadway Neighborhood.

In 1911, Mrs. Thomas Emery, a Newport socialite, built the elaborate Beaux-Arts style YMCA building (Figure 38) at the head of Washington Square to serve visiting Army and Navy personnel. Equipped with over one hundred rooms, a cafeteria, a laundry, a bank and a recreational facility, the YMCA operated an active social program and was a haven for servicemen until cutbacks at the local naval base forced its closure in 1973. Bars, night clubs and saloons which catered to sailors flourished on River Lane, Marlborough Street, Broadway and West Broadway. In addition, clothing and variety stores, pharmacies and bookstores as well as theaters and tattoo parlors located in the vicinity of Washington Square.

By 1930, most of Washington Square's fine Colonial and Federal mansions had succumbed to commercial redevelopment, super-



Figure 38: Army-Navy YMCA, 1911; 50 Washington Square.

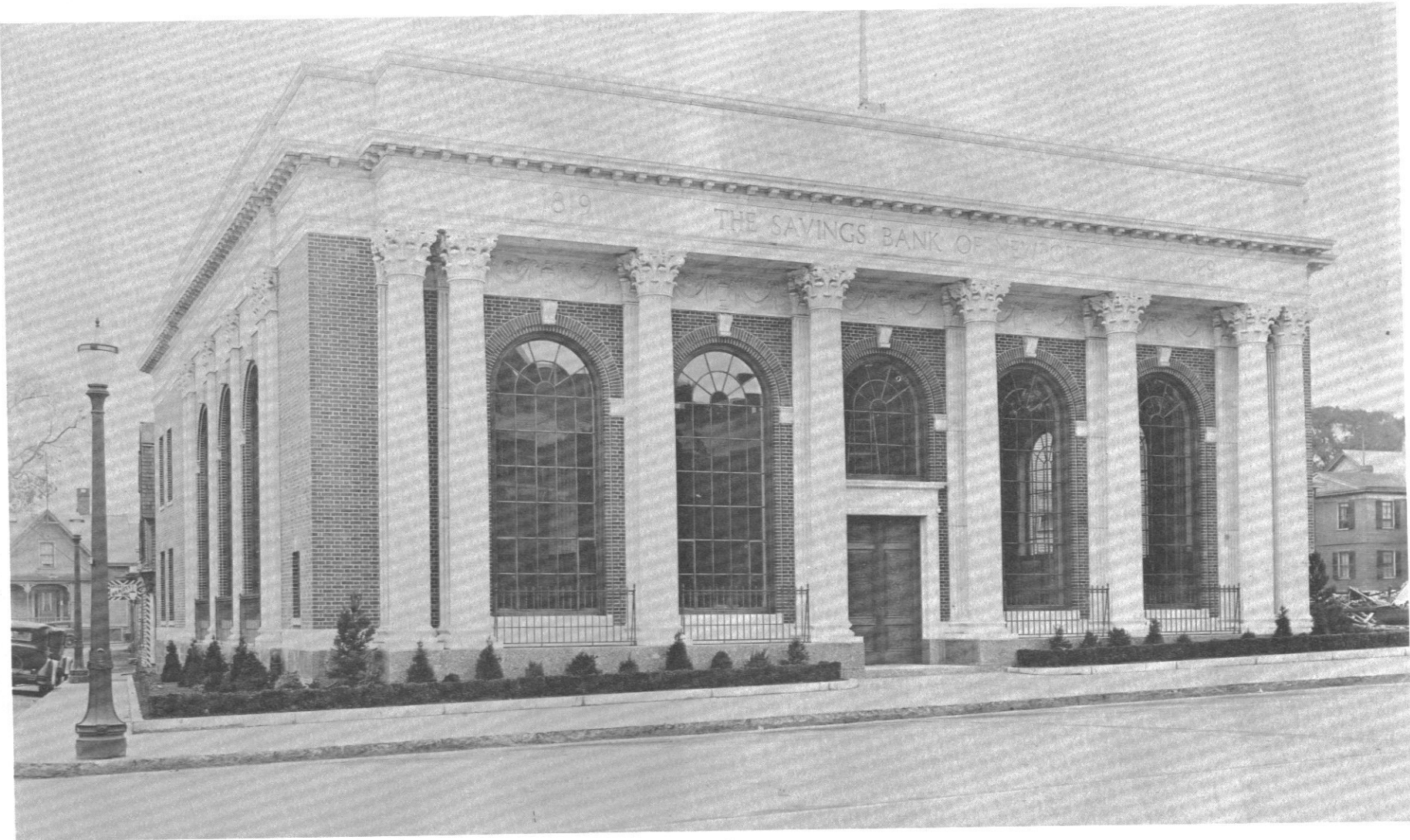


Figure 39: The Savings Bank of Newport, 1929; photograph, c. 1929; 10 Washington Square.

seded by several Georgian Revival and Neoclassical buildings located between Marlborough, Meeting, Colonial, Charles and Duke streets, with large parking lots laid out behind them. The most prominent new buildings erected were the Newport County Court-house (1926), which exemplifies the rediscovery, detailed study and

re-creation of Colonial and Federal architectural motifs, and the Neoclassical, brick and marble Savings Bank of Newport (1929) (Figure 39). Although the disintegration of Washington Square's earlier fabric is unfortunate, these fine early twentieth-century buildings merit preservation for their own architectural significance



Figure 40: USO Building (Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Center), 1944; 20-28 West Broadway.

and place in the city's development.

In the 1930s, less elaborate Georgian Revival commercial blocks, housing either automobile salesrooms or workshops, were built along West Broadway; and, in 1944, a USO building (Figure 40) was built on West Broadway for Black servicemen not allowed in the Washington Square YMCA during World War II. Many of the bars and lounges which blight Broadway and West Broadway today were also opened at this time.

Broadway's and Washington Square's present architectural incongruities (including nondescript store fronts, incompatible graphics, chain stores, gas stations and a bus terminal) together with the loss of the street's majestic elm trees have resulted in the erosion of the area's cohesive commercial streetscape. The new Bellevue Avenue shopping centers absorbed much of Broadway's retail activity and effected a high turnover of small businesses in this commercial district.

Residential Development

The West Broadway Neighborhood remained an ethnically diverse and racially intergrated, working-class residential area in the twentieth century. During this era, there was little new construction due to the scarcity of available land. Less than a dozen houses and tenements built between 1907 and 1921 survive in the West Broadway and northern Thames Street residential areas, and, generally, these buildings resemble the area's late nineteenth-century housing. In some cases, new construction necessitated the demolition of older buildings. The Mumford School (1909) on Farewell Street replaced two Greek Revival school buildings which were moved to the northwest corner of Farewell and North Baptist streets. St. Joseph's Catholic Church (1911) (Figure 41), a Renaissance-inspired building constructed of beige brick on a cruciform plan with side aisles, clerestory and circular stained-glass windows, was built at another cleared site on Broadway. Later in the century, the USO building (1944) on West Broadway and the Pond Avenue and Coddington Housing Units for the Elderly (1962 and 1969) replaced large sections of residential fabric with visually incompatible buildings. The design of these structures ignores the scale and building materials of the adjacent streetscapes, thereby detracting from the neighborhood's historical character.

Housing in the West Broadway residential area deteriorated during the mid-twentieth century as a result of poverty, neighborhood disinterest, poor maintenance and housing abandonment. When Newport's housing conditions and environmental quality were analyzed in 1970, the resulting report, *Programs for Community Action*, indicated that the West Broadway Neighborhood exhibited "major structural deficiencies" in many buildings. *NEEDS*, another environmental study and evaluation of the city's neighborhoods, concluded:

Housing conditions in the West Broadway Neighborhood are not good. The houses badly need repairs and maintenance Premise conditions are also not good. Neglected landscaping, strewn trash and uncollectable discards are prevalent.

The recreational and social service programs of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center (Figure 40) and the in-fill housing program of the



Figure 41: St. Joseph's Catholic Church, 1911; 57 Broadway.

Church-Community Corporation (1969) were formed to combat long standing deficiencies in the neighborhood's environment.

The King Center grew out of the Community Association Center (1924), formerly located in the Meetinghouse of the Society of Friends. Initially formed as a community-wide recreational facility, including an actors' guild and a small natural history museum, the organization was gradually transformed into a settlement house to improve the social and educational opportunities of the residents in the West Broadway Neighborhood. In 1967, the Center moved into the old USO building on West Broadway.

Between 1970 and 1974, the Church-Community Corporation conducted an in-fill housing program to help residents rebuild their neighborhood which had rapidly declined as a result of neglect. The strategy of this program was "to arrest and reverse the process of neighborhood disinvestment through a self-help effort designed for rapid, highly visible housing improvements." The tactics included securing initial capitalization from twenty-four of Rhode Island's churches and church organizations, borrowing construction loans from local banks and obtaining housing seed-money loans and grants as well as technical assistance from the Rhode Island Department of Community Affairs. The Church-Community Corporation presently owns four dwellings on Burnside Avenue where it is completing eight substantially rehabilitated units; it has already built six two-story cottages with gambrel roofs which have been sold to low-income residents. The scale and building materials of these houses are visually compatible with the neighborhood's fabric. In 1976, Church-Community Corporation also became the administrative agency for the city's residential rehabilitation program in the Broadway-West Broadway-Washington Square Community Development Project Area and has been working closely with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission to revitalize the West Broadway Neighborhood's housing stock in an historically appropriate manner.