

I. INTRODUCTION

An historical and architectural in-depth survey of the West Broadway Neighborhood in Newport, Rhode Island, was begun by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission in July, 1975, in conjunction with the city's Community Development Program. The survey was funded by the Historical Preservation Commission, through a survey and planning grant from the National Park Service, and by the City of Newport, with funds made available through the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. In this report, the term "West Broadway Neighborhood" designates the entire Broadway-West Broadway-Washington Square Community Development Project Area.

To accomplish the goals of the statewide survey program three stages are necessary: field survey, preparation of maps and publication of a final report on each area studied. A standard survey form, the "Historic Building Data Sheet," is used throughout the state. It incorporates both architectural and historical information and a photograph of each building or site. Historical information is obtained through the use of local maps, state atlases, city directories and published and unpublished histories, guidebooks or manuscripts which are readily available. Extensive deed research is not undertaken by the Commission staff. Data from the survey forms are ultimately transferred onto maps so that information pertaining to historical preservation can be easily used for planning purposes.

Upon completion of the survey by the Historical Preservation Commission, copies of the survey forms, maps and final report are filed at the Commission's central office and in appropriate local repositories, such as the city or town hall, historical society or library.

This report presents a concise history of the West Broadway Neighborhood and recommendations for preservation planning. In the appendices are explanations of the National Register of Historic Places, the grants-in-aid program, historic district zoning and the survey form of the Historical Preservation Commission. An Inventory of noteworthy structures and sites in the survey area and a list of pertinent preservation agencies are also included.

The scope of the survey has been the whole spectrum of the West Broadway Neighborhood's past as revealed in its present form, including topography, street pattern and commercial, industrial, institutional and residential buildings. This report deals with those manifestations of the neighborhood's past which should be retained as a living, active part of the city's present and future life. The function of this report is threefold: it is a planning tool, which can be used to guide future development; it is an educational resource, useful in the study of state and local history; and it can be a catalyst in awakening civic pride, helping residents to become aware of the historical and architectural environment in which they live and encouraging them to take a positive interest in the future of their neighborhood.

The Historical Preservation Commission would like to thank the following individuals who have contributed their time and advice to the West Broadway Neighborhood survey: Mr. Brian Pelletier of the Newport Historic District Commission; Mr. William A. Sherman, Mrs. Peter Bolhouse and Mr. Stanley A. Ward of the Newport Historical Society; Mr. Samuel L. Jernigan, Jr., Mr. John G. Horton, Ms. Lucy L. Eddy and Mr. Guy E. Weston of the Newport Planning Department; Captain Eugene B. Henry, Jr. of the Newport Public Library; Mr. William H. Leys of the Newport Redevelopment Agency; Mr. George Weaver of the Newport Restoration Foundation; Mr. Daniel R. Porter of The Preservation Society of Newport County; Dr. Patrick T. Conley of the Rhode Island Bicentennial Commission; Mrs. Rowena Stewart of The Rhode Island Black Heritage Society; Mr. Edwin W. Connelly of the Rhode Island Graves Registration Commission; and Nancy F. Chudacoff, Marsha Peters and Amy Zehnder of The Rhode Island Historical Society.

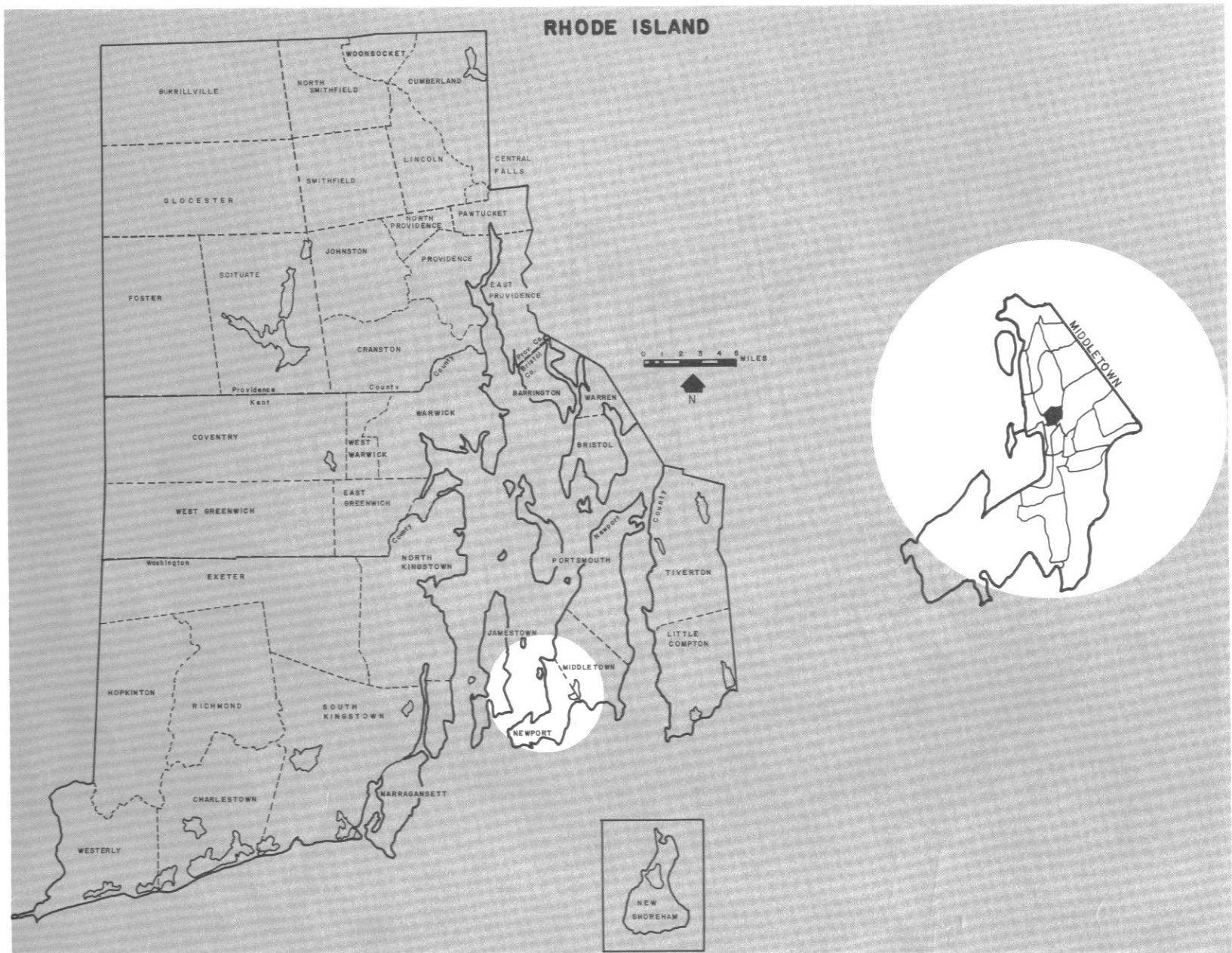


Figure 1: Map of Rhode Island, designating the location of the West Broadway Neighborhood.

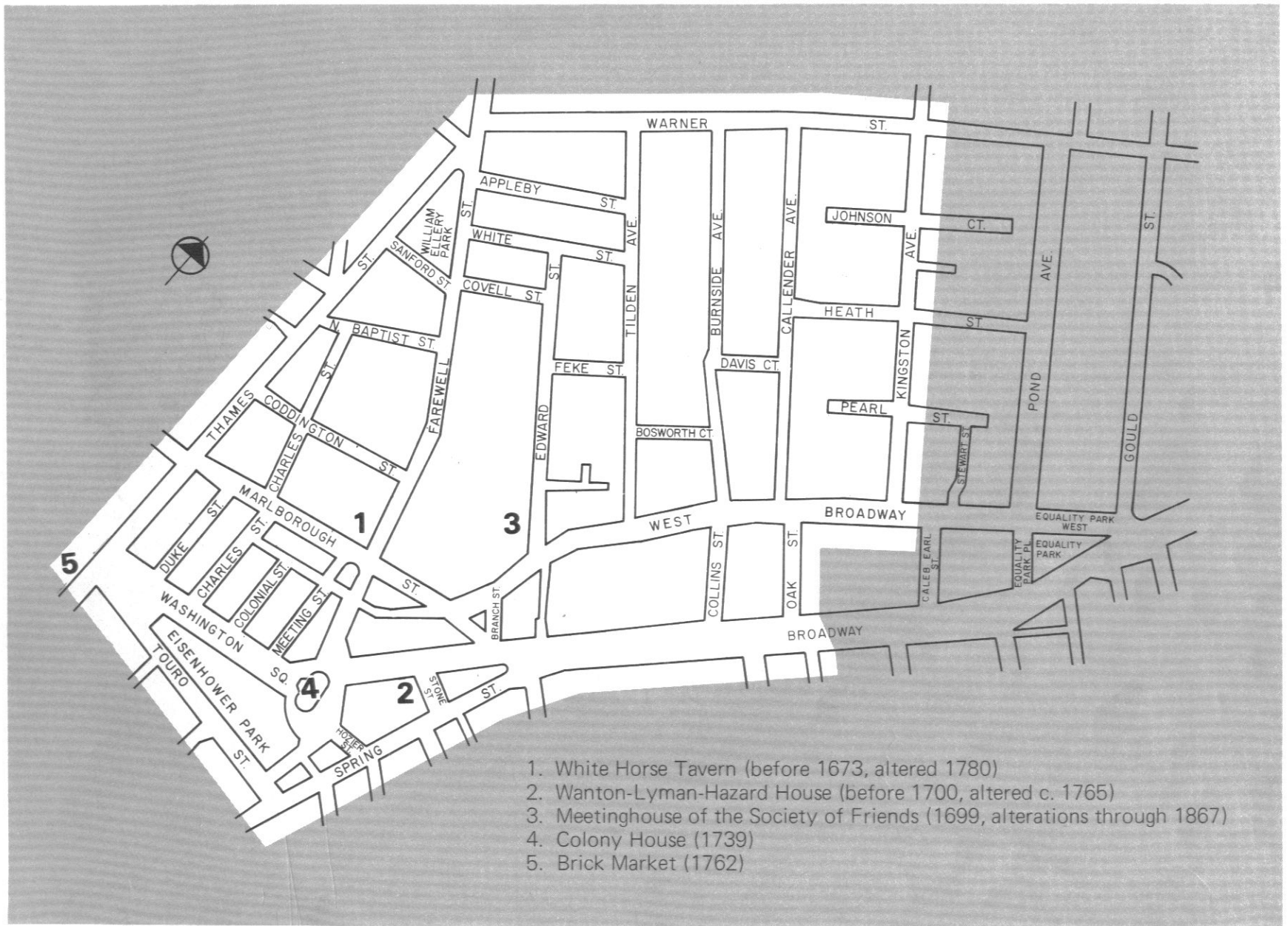


Figure 2: Map of the West Broadway Neighborhood, designating the area which falls within Newport's National Historic Landmark District.

II. PHYSICAL SETTING

The City of Newport is located at the southern end of Aquidneck Island in Narragansett Bay, about thirty miles south of Providence. It is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the east and south, by Narragansett Bay on the north and west and by Middletown on the northeast. The total area of Newport is approximately twelve-and-a-half square miles, with seven square miles of land.

The West Broadway Neighborhood is located in the northern half of the city (Figure 1). It is bounded by Broadway and Spring, Touro, Thames, Warner and Gould streets (Figure 2). Within the survey area, forty-five acres of land are residentially utilized, while twenty-two acres are occupied by commercial activity. Based on street pattern, land use and the physical environment, four distinct sections are evident within the neighborhood's boundaries: the large West Broadway residential area, the narrow Broadway-West Broadway commercial district, the triangular northern Thames Street residential area and the Washington Square commercial district (Figure 3).

West Broadway Residential Area

The core of the West Broadway Neighborhood is the West Broadway residential area, bounded by West Broadway and Farewell, Warner and Gould streets. This section is a small-scale urban district laid out in an irregular street grid with many dead-end alleys. The dwellings are modest, middle and late nineteenth-century structures with some earlier buildings intermingled; overall, there is a lack of elaborate architectural detailing. Although the neighborhood's fabric is somewhat deteriorated, its housing stock is basically sound.

Broadway-West Broadway Commercial District

The commercial strip between Broadway and West Broadway extends from Equality Park to Branch Street and frames the survey area on the southeast. West Broadway was constructed over the bed of a stream which had powered mills in the vicinity of Branch and Marlborough streets. A mill stood on the triangular plot of land at Branch Street now occupied by an

old service station; and, unless the installation of underground gasoline tanks destroyed all traces of the old mill, parts of its foundation may survive. The district was densely built up in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but that fabric is largely gone, having been replaced by interesting Victorian and nondescript twentieth-century buildings. If carefully rehabilitated, the run-down row of commercial buildings along Broadway between Collins Street and Equality Park could enhance Newport's central business district.

Northern Thames Street Residential Area

This triangular region, bounded by Farewell, Marlborough and Thames streets, comprises the western section of the survey area. Unlike the West Broadway residential area, this district contains a large concentration of eighteenth-century houses, some of which have been moved into the area by the Newport Restoration Foundation in an attempt to strengthen its colonial ambience. Other dwellings in this area have been restored under the direction of the Newport Restoration Foundation, as well as Oldport, Inc. and Operation Clapboard. Although primarily residential, the northern Thames Street residential area has commercial and public land uses which contribute to its diversity and vitality.

Washington Square Commercial District

Bounded by Marlborough, Thames, Touro and Spring streets, this commercial district contains a rich concentration of historic landmarks and distinctive architecture from all periods in Newport's past. Eisenhower Park is the focal point of Washington Square. The park's landscaping is no longer as cohesive as it was in the nineteenth century when tall shade trees were uniformly sited throughout the green; views of the surrounding buildings are now partially blocked by low-spreading trees. Although some of the historic buildings along Broadway and around Washington Square have been restored or rehabilitated, others are still in deteriorated condition.

National Recognition as Part of an Historic Landmark District

Newport's unique architectural character as a colonial seaport and resort community was honored by the United States Department of the Interior in 1968 when the boundaries of Newport's municipal historic district were expanded to form a National Historic Landmark District; most of the West Broadway Neighborhood falls within this Landmark District (Figure 2).

Houses on both sides of, and located within, the area enclosed by the following streets were included:

Beginning at the junction of Thames and Bridge streets, west on Bridge Street to Second Street, south (left) on Second Street to Marsh Street, west (right) on Marsh Street to Washington Street, north (right) on Washington Street to Chestnut Street, east (right) on Chestnut Street to Third Street, south (right) on Third Street to Walnut Street, west (left) on Walnut Street to Farewell Street, southeast (right) on Farewell Street to Warner Street, northeast (left) on Warner Street to Kingston Avenue, southeast (right) on Kingston Avenue to West Broadway, southwest (right) on West Broadway to Oak Street, southeast (left) on Oak Street to Broadway, southwest (right) on Broadway to Bull Street, southeast (left) on Bull Street to Mt. Vernon Street, southwest (right) on Mt. Vernon Street to Touro Street, southeast (left) on Touro Street to Bellevue Avenue, south (right) on Bellevue Avenue to William Street, west (right) on William Street to Thomas Street and Golden Hill, south (left) on Thomas Street and Golden Hill to Spring Street, south (left) on Spring Street to Pope Street, west (right) on Pope Street to Thames Street and north (right) on Thames Street (about one mile) to its junction with Bridge Street, the beginning point.

Famous colonial landmarks in the West Broadway Neighborhood, such as the White Horse Tavern (before 1673, altered 1780), the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House (before 1700, altered c. 1765), the Meetinghouse of the Society of Friends (1699, alterations through 1867), the Colony House (1739) and Brick Market (1762), are located in this National Historic Landmark District, as well as fine rows of well preserved, eighteenth-century dwellings and shops

along northern Thames Street and in the vicinity of Washington Square. A large section of the West Broadway residential area, consisting primarily of small-scaled, middle and late nineteenth-century, working-class housing, is also included. A bronze plaque, identifying this area as a National Historic Landmark District, is located in the West Broadway Neighborhood on the small green at the corner of Thames and Cross streets.

In order to ensure the continued preservation of the West Broadway Neighborhood, it is important for property owners and residents to be aware of the area's contribution to our nation's heritage; there follows an explanation of the West Broadway Neighborhood's changing role in Newport's development from the seventeenth century to the present.