

Salve Regina University

## Digital Commons @ Salve Regina

---

Faculty and Staff - Articles & Papers

Faculty and Staff

---

2009

### From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill: Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

James C. Garman

Salve Regina University, garmanj@salve.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/fac\\_staff\\_pub](https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/fac_staff_pub)



Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#)

---

Garman, James C., "From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill: Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I." (2009). *Faculty and Staff - Articles & Papers*. 23.

[https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/fac\\_staff\\_pub/23](https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/fac_staff_pub/23)

#### Rights Statement

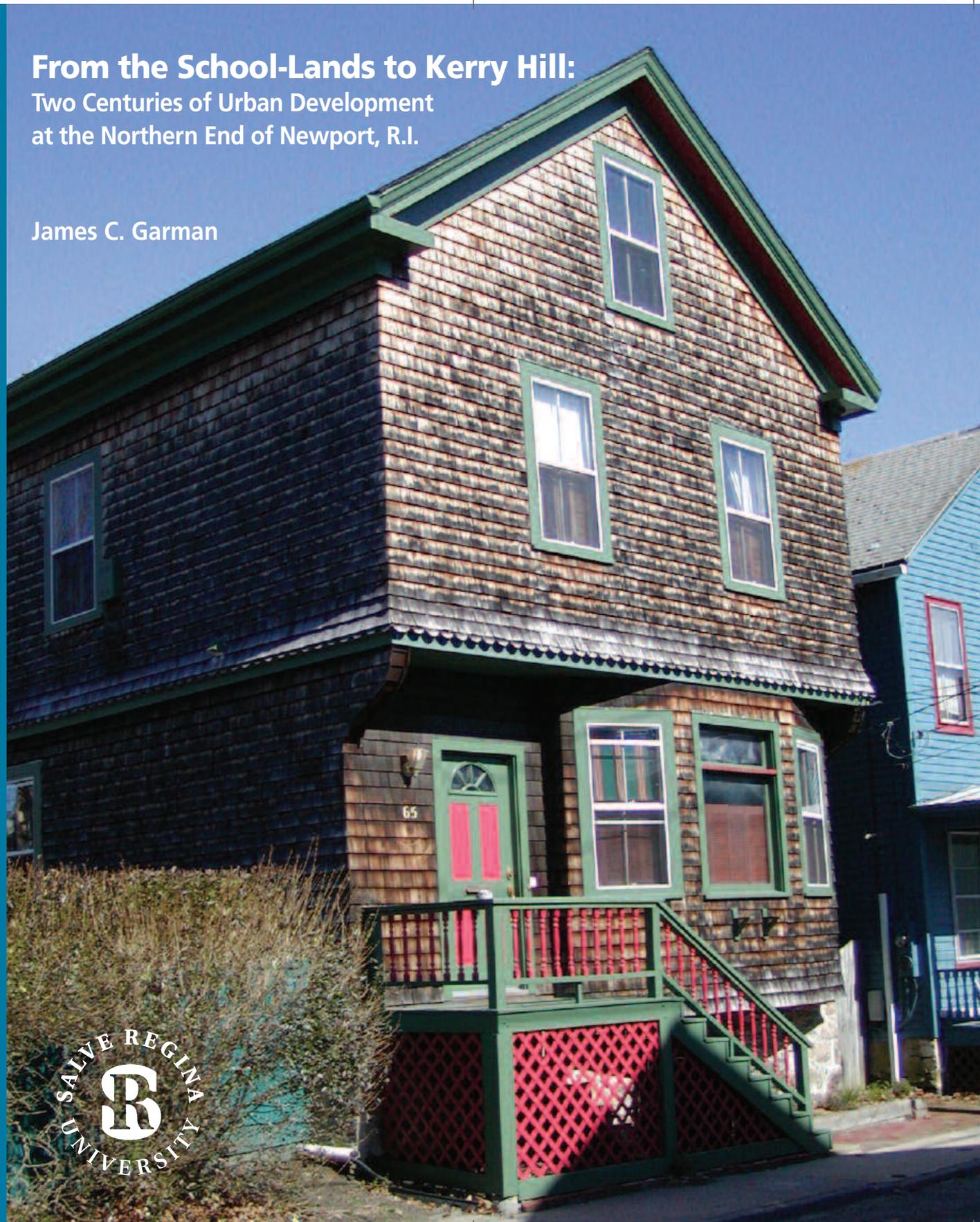


In Copyright - Educational Use Permitted. URI: <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC-EDU/1.0/>

This Item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. In addition, no permission is required from the rights-holder(s) for educational uses. For other uses, you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).

# From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill: Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

James C. Garman



## FROM THE SCHOOL-LANDS TO KERRY HILL: TWO CENTURIES OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT AT THE NORTHERN END OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND<sup>1</sup>

**On May 4, 1815** George Johnson of Newport, Rhode Island, describing himself as a “free man of Colour, Mariner”<sup>2</sup> sat down to write his last will and testament. After recommending his soul “into the hands of Almighty God that gave it,” Johnson proceeded to dispose of his real estate:

*I Give Devise and Bequeath unto my Son Benjamin Johnson the Westernmost House standing on Lot number Eighteen with seven feet and a half of Land to the eastward of said House... I also Give to my Son Benjamin my Lot of Land number seventeen measureth on Spruce Street fifty feet, seven inches, Southeasterly One hundred and one feet, Southwesterly fifty feet seven inches, Northwesterly One hundred and one feet.<sup>3</sup>*

Other bequests were even more specific. “I also give Mary Hazard a Home in the East Chamber of the House given to my Son Benjamin as long as she remains unmarried,” Johnson wrote. After additional bequests, he added a final note:

*I also Give a Home to my Sister Sarah Williams and her Daughter if they should stand in need and remove from New York to Newport leaveing (sic) it to fall on my Dear Children to agree what part she may Choose.*

Three Newporters witnessed George Johnson’s signature to his will: David Braman, Jr., a wealthy real estate speculator; gravestone carver John Stevens;<sup>4</sup> and Arthur Flagg, a prominent member of the African- American community and co-founder of the African Benevolent Society, an organization Johnson had served as a Director for the five years leading to his death.

The last will and testament of George Johnson serves as a touchstone for themes that will be articulated in this essay. Several are readily apparent: African-American ownership of property in the New Nation, for example. Others, such as Johnson’s concern not only for his own children but also for his sister, his niece, and Mary Hazard, are subtle, and reflect complex relationships and alliances among extended African-American families. Perhaps most intriguing are the various witnesses to the will, whose signatures speak to the complexities of negotiating the color line in early nineteenth-century Newport: a member of the white elite (Braman), a member of the white artisan class (Stevens), and a leading member of the African-American community, all represented on the same document.

One of George Johnson’s houses - the one given to his son Benjamin - still stands on the northeastern

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

corner of Kingston Avenue (formerly Spruce Street) and Johnson Court in Newport. To walk along Kingston Avenue is to experience a streetscape oddly different from those in “better-preserved” sections of the city. The street and its perpendicular courts— Pearl Street, Heath Street, and Johnson Court— constitute the fragments of a grid system never fully realized. The housing stock, while tending toward mid- and late-nineteenth century tenement houses, contains occasional surprises: a five-bay Federal house, stripped of its claboards and open to the weather; a similar house, wrapped in heavy shingles and canted at an odd angle to the street; a well-preserved vernacular church (now a private residence), the first church building constructed by Newport’s African-American community.

Known over time as the “School Lands” (ca. 1763 -1800), “New Town” (ca. 1800-1850), and Kerry Hill (1850-present), the Kingston Avenue study area represents one of the earliest enclaves of free African Americans in Newport. Building on the work of the RIHPC and Richard Youngken,<sup>5</sup> this essay seeks to identify and place into historical context surviving buildings and landscapes related to African-American experiences in the post-Revolutionary War, Antebellum and Gilded Age periods. It represents the first systematic study of the establishment, settlement, and survival of this important neighborhood, set on a windswept hillside on the northerly edge of the colonial city, and the first effort since the 1970 Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission survey to identify significant architectural and historical associations in the study area.

### THE STUDY AREA

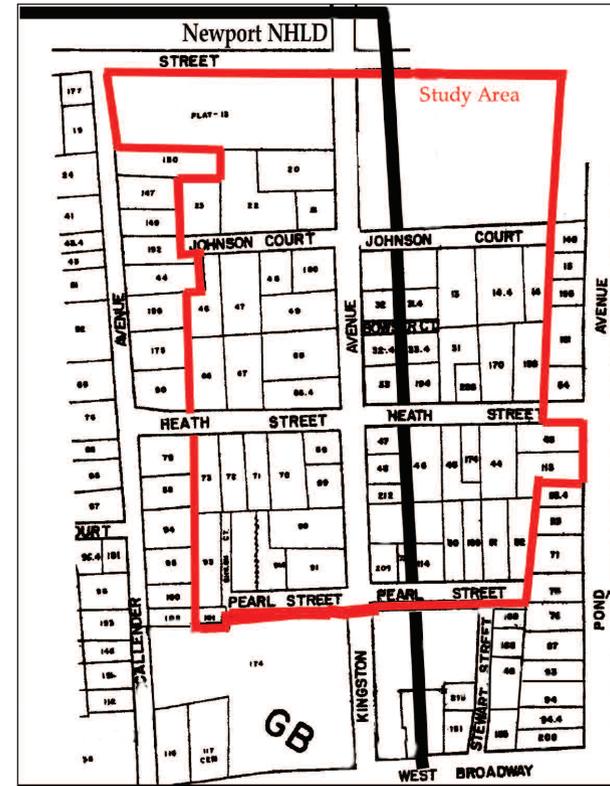
The study area encompasses an area bounded by Pearl Street on the south and Warner Street on the north (Figure 1). All properties with frontage on Kingston Avenue and Warner Street were surveyed, comprising 48 properties. The easterly half of the study area, including all properties fronting Kingston Avenue on both sides of the street and the courts (Pearl Street, Heath Street, and Johnson Court) on the westerly side of the street, lies within the West Broadway portion of the Newport National Historic Landmark District (NHL). Properties on the courts on the easterly side of Kingston Avenue are not presently included in the NHL. None of the area is included within the local Historic District. For specific plat and lot designations, the reader is referred to the individual survey forms.

#### Organizational Scheme

In conducting research for this project, four appropriate and distinct historical contexts were identified. The four contexts include the settlement of the area as part of the “School-Lands” project (1763-1774); the development of an enclave of free African-American settlement (1790-1840); Irish immigration and the African-American migration from the South (1840- 1890); and Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Mediterranean immigration (1890-1920). These contexts are discussed chronologically, with specific reference to land evidence and other information concerning the construction, movement, and destruction of historic properties. A section at the end of each context discussed pertinent historical properties surviving in the study area. The essay closes with a preliminary evaluation of the study area’s eligibility for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

Figure 1. Relationship of the study area (bounded in red) to the boundary of the Newport National Historic Landmark District.



### THE SCHOOL-LANDS PROJECT, 1763 - 1774

On the 1639 arrival of the first EuroAmerican colonists, settlement in Newport focused on an area known as the Town Spring. Located on Spring Street near its intersection with Touro Street and Broadway, the spring formed a nucleus around which residents established house lots, shops, and orchards. Broadway, referenced in deeds as “the road leading out of town,” provided a link to the parent settlement at Pocasset and, through a series of ferry crossings, to Boston and the other towns of Massachusetts Bay.

Precisely when Tanner Street (later West Broadway and now Dr. Marcus F. Wheatland Boulevard) was laid out is difficult to determine. It certainly existed by 1712, when John Mumford drew a crude map of the growing city. West of Tanner Street, the present study area was remote and unsettled, with no direct link to any of the major thoroughfares. Later topographical surveys depict the area as hilly, with what would become Kingston Avenue crossing the crests of two parallel slopes trending toward the west.

The first mention of the study area in the historical record occurs in December 1661, when the Town of Newport purchased 12 acres from Bartholomew Hunt.<sup>6</sup> In return Hunt received nearly 100 acres of land in what would eventually become Middletown. The disparity in acreage in the transaction - 12 urban acres for 100 in a rural district - is difficult to assess. It may be that the town had some notion of the future value of the land, given its proximity to Broadway, the major gateway into the urban core. The homestead, orchard, and burying ground of

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

Dr. John Clarke, who had obtained the Charter for the Rhode Island Colony from Charles II, abutted the 12-acre lot, as did the relatively noisome small-scale industrial processes that gave Dr. Marcus F. Wheatland Boulevard its original name of Tanner Street.

Prior to 1763, the town informally rented portions of the property to individuals - Mr. William Read, a Mr. Clark, Captain Daniel Donham, and Mr. Thomas George, among others.<sup>7</sup> In contrast with bustling Thames Street and the waterfront, popular interest in this portion of town remained relatively low. Slightly north of the 12-acre lot, for example, was a separate city-owned lot described in documents as "The Gallows-Field."<sup>8</sup> The Common Burying Ground lay to the northwest of the lot, and defined the limits of the town. Efforts to raise revenue from these town-held lands were sporadic. By the beginning of 1762, the Town Meeting had appointed a subcommittee to examine the possibility of dividing the land and instituting a more formal leasing system. In April 1763, the subcommittee reported back to the full Town Meeting that they had accomplished their task:

*WHEREAS the Freemen of said Town, at a Meeting held the Fourth Day of April, A.D. 1763, did pass a Vote, that the School-Lands belonging to said Town should be divided into Lots, and sold at a Public Vendue to the highest Bidder, to hold the same of the said Town of Newport in the Manner of Fee Farm, subject to an annual Quit-rent.<sup>9</sup>*

A "sworn surveyor," Samuel Mumford, had divided the 12-acre parcel into a series of houselots measuring 50 feet x 100 feet - the same size as those that had

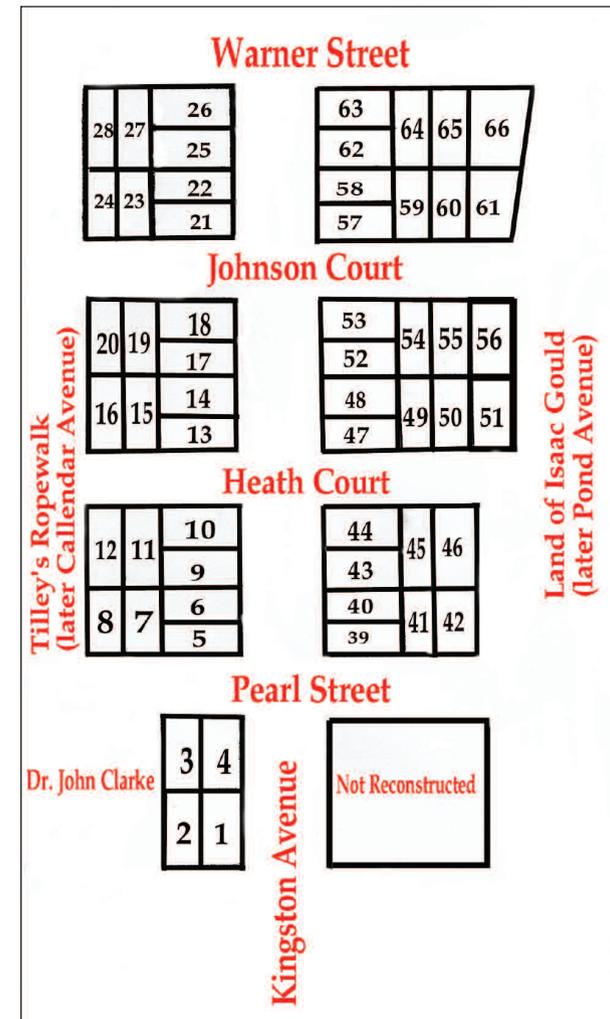
been laid out in Easton's Point, approximately two decades earlier. In anticipation of brisk sales, the town printed blank deeds for the project, specifying "Fee Farm" ownership and the annual payment of a quit-rent.<sup>10</sup> Profits from the sales and the annual quit-rents would be paid to the Town Treasurer "for ye Schooling and educating of poor Children," although the mechanism to put this plan into effect was never specified.<sup>11</sup> Education in Newport was largely the province of private schoolmasters, and remained so until the completion of the first public school in 1828.<sup>12</sup> Although occasional temporary schoolhouses were constructed in the eighteenth century, they were generally short-lived. Whether any "poor Children" reaped any of the benefits of the School-Lands project is not at all clear. Further study of disbursements from the Town, which may list payments for educating the poor, might be able to answer the question of where the collected money went.

**The School-Lands "Grid"**

Reconstructing the historical development of the School-Lands would be much more straightforward if the Mumford plat, complete with its depiction of the numbered houselots, had survived. Intense search of the archives of the Newport Historical Society and Newport City Hall suggests that the plan does not exist anymore. The only way to reconstruct the original scheme has been to puzzle it out based on the relationship of the metes and bounds specified in more than 75 of the original deeds to one another (Figure 2).

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

**Figure 2.** Reconstruction of the School Lands grid established in 1763.



Kingston Avenue. The unusual configuration of Lots 1 through 4 was due to prior development (including the house, orchard, and burying ground of Dr. John Clarke) on what would have been the western half of the block.

As one proceeds north through the study area, the plan becomes more logical. Each block measures approximately 200 feet north to south by 200 feet east to west. Substantial deviations exist on the eastern blocks, where the eastern boundary gradually flares toward the northeast. Within each block were at least eight lots measuring approximately 50 x 100 feet. Numbering progressed gradually from south to north; on reaching Warner Street, the surveyors returned to Tanner Street and continued numbering the sequence from south to north. Additional lots, numbering approximately 66 through 78, were located on the north side of Warner Street. The exact configuration of these lots, many of which were eventually absorbed into the Willow and then the Island Cemetery in the early 1850s, is impossible to determine.

For the purposes of broad discussion, I have chosen to retain the original lot scheme, and will refer to properties by their original lot numbers (we are fortunate that there was never a second numbering of the lots.) Although the original plan does not refer to blocks, I will use that term to describe them in the order that the surveyors numbered the lots.<sup>13</sup>

In reconstructing the original plan, I have taken a conservative approach. The scheme began at Tanner Street, now Dr. Marcus F. Wheatland Boulevard, with Lots 1 through 4. These were arranged in a unique configuration of two pairs of two lots, with each lot's long axis parallel with the road that would become

Lots 29 through 38 would have occupied the block bounded by Dr. Marcus F. Wheatland Boulevard on the South, Kingston Avenue on the west, Pearl Street on the north, and Stewart Street on the east. Most buildings within this portion of the study area have been

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

leveled by mid-twentieth-century construction. The block has no potential contributing properties, and was therefore not surveyed as part of this project.

**Speculation in the School-Lands**

Speculation in the School Lands Project was initially intense (see Appendix B).<sup>14</sup> All the lots were sold in the first year. One small problem arose in that a disparity existed between Hunt’s original deed and Mumford’s layout of lots: “But upon measuring ye land over again we found ye land was twenty feet longer than it was laid out for...,” the committee reported to the Town.<sup>15</sup> This disparity may account for the divergence of the easterly boundary as it runs from south to north.

The School Lands volume provides a great deal of insight into the character of the speculation. Most of the individuals involved in the speculation could be

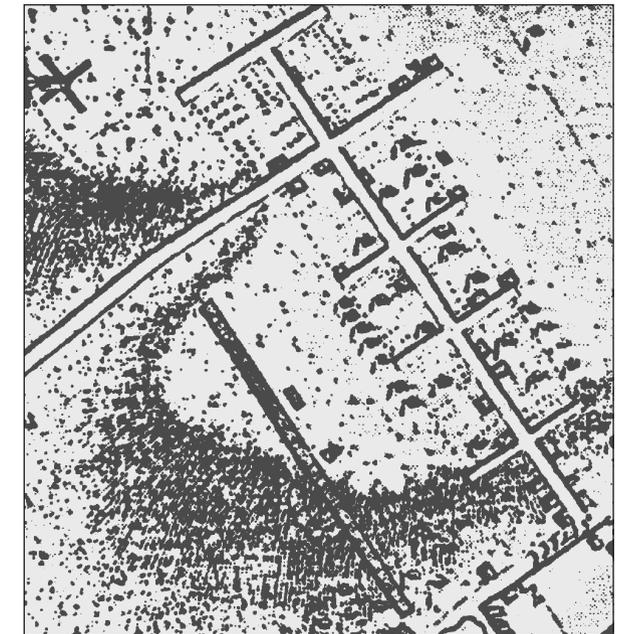
classified as members of a colonial artisan class - goldsmith Thomas Clagget, lock-maker Peter Gaines, brazier Henry Whiting. Three housewrights and a house carpenter also purchased lots in New Town, a circumstance which must have led to hopes that the area would soon become as thickly settled as Easton’s Point. Of even greater importance is the suggestion that noisome and unpleasant industries, such as leather working and food provisioning, were designated for the northerly edge of town in an informal system of zoning. Finally, the new lots offered space for industries needing it - ropemaking, for example, an industry requiring the construction of ropewalks measuring between 500 and 700 feet in length. Despite the interest in the properties, relatively few people actually built houses in the School-Lands. Deeds in the School Lands volume subsequent to the original dispersal of property indicate that few properties changed hands with dwelling houses or

buildings. By 1774, only 12 of the 65 to 70 original lots were occupied (Table 1). Of those 12, 11 were houselots and the twelfth - Lot 13 - held a slaughterhouse. There is a remarkably high congruence between the land evidence study and the map made by the British surveyor Charles Blaskowitz (Figure 3).

The Blaskowitz map shows the New Town area gridded out, with the east-to-west court extensions laid out but never connected to streets parallel with Spruce. Note that the School-Lands project extended past Warner Street and terminated at a cross street. No evidence of that cross-street survives today; this portion of the study area is now the Island Cemetery, established first as the Willow Cemetery in 1847. Fifteen structures are visible in the map, correlating extremely well with the information developed from systematic study of land evidence - a tribute to British military map-making of the time.

On April 14, 1775, Nathan Luther, a cordwainer, sold Lot 64 of the School-Lands to Edward Perry, a butcher, for 16 Spanish Milled Dollars.<sup>17</sup> No subsequent transactions are recorded in the School-Lands volume. Five days later and sixty miles away in Lexington, Massachusetts, a makeshift band of colonial militia opened fire on Major Pitcairn’s punitive expeditionary force into Concord. In the entire corpus of Newport’s city documents, only a handful of transactions were recorded between 1775 and the conclusion of hostilities through the Treaty of Paris. The School-Lands era was officially over.

**Figure 3. Detail of the Blaskowitz Map<sup>18</sup> of Newport (1777).** Tanner Street (later West Broadway) is at bottom center; note the ropewalk west of what is now Kingston Avenue.



**The School-Lands During the Revolution**

That little building could have been carried out in the School-Lands during the Revolution seems certain. Quite to the contrary, limited documentary evidence suggests that as in most Newport neighborhoods, property in the study area suffered damage during the occupation of the city by a combined force of British and Hessian troops. The occupying forces would have had ample opportunity for vandalism and pillage in the School-Lands. They would certainly have made use of the Powder House, and what would become Kingston Avenue was the only route from town proper to the field where the magazine stood. Indeed, the post-war collection of damage claims filed by the occupants of Newport against the

**TABLE 1. HOUSES IN NEW TOWN, 1775.<sup>16</sup>**

Lot	Last Owner	Type of Building	Bracket Dates of Construction
6	Jonathan Langworthy	Dwelling House	1763-1772
13	Samuel Smith	Slaughter House	1763-1769
14	Daniel Smith	Dwelling House	1763-1767
17	Edward Perry	Dwelling House	1763-1774
20	Charles Willet	Dwelling House	1763 (possibly prior)
22	Sarah Paul	Dwelling House	1763-1765
24	Elijah Knapp	Dwelling House	1765-1766
25	Sarah Paul	Dwelling House	1763-1765
26	William Crossing	Dwelling House	1763-1766
61	Edward Cole	Dwelling House	1763-1774
62	Lillibridge Worth	Dwelling House	1763-1769
70	Elijah Clarke	Dwelling House	1763-1771
(?)	William Davis	Dwelling House	1763-1774

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

Crown includes several properties that can be associated with the School-Lands.<sup>19</sup> One School-Lands house that was almost certainly destroyed belonged to Thomas Crossing, who submitted a claim for his properties on April 19, 1782.<sup>20</sup> Crossing, one of the lead speculators in the original sale of the School-Lands, filed the following claim:

*One Dwelling House Rebuilt about 12 Yrs. Since together With an Stake Sleuter house formerly improved by Mr. Henry Gardner Scituate within a Mile from the Town, one House a Little eastward of the Pound, as also one House in the new Lane...*<sup>21</sup>

Crossing added that he had also lost "One dwelling House almost New Greatly Damaged"<sup>22</sup> in a location unspecified. The "House in the new Lane" may refer to a dwelling house on Lot 26, built between 1763 and 1766, with what would become Kingston Avenue referred to as the "new Lane." Alternately, the 13 to 16-year-old house may also qualify as the "almost New" property. Other losses are more difficult to trace. Robert Lillibridge, who owned several lots in the School-Lands, reported the destruction of three houses, including "one house more in Town Taken away to burn."<sup>23</sup> This could have been an unrecorded house on Lot 57 or 58. Between 1764 and 1775, dwelling houses had been built on Lots 22 and 24. When these lots changed hands in 1792, as described below, no buildings were mentioned.<sup>24</sup>

The magnitude of social and economic change wrought on Newport by the vicissitudes of occupation cannot be overstated. That the School-Lands project would have slowed or stalled is entirely within expectations, especially when one considers

that the departing British-Hessian armies carried off all town records, including deeds and land evidence. Although the wharves and maritime support industries would eventually be rebuilt, the School-Lands project lingered for nearly a decade after the end of hostilities. The scheme would reappear in the 1790s, with the educational purpose dropped and a new name - New Town - provided to make the area more attractive to speculators and members of the artisan class. Although the intent may have not been explicit, the area would become attractive to a third group: that is, the newly-emancipated African Americans who would stake their claim for a share in the United States' hard-won independence.

#### Historical Properties Associated with the School-Lands Period

Only one historical property associated with the School-Lands period survives: the **Luke Waldron House** (43 Warner Street). The Blaskowitz map shows a house on this lot by 1778. Named for its later association with the first minister of the Mount Zion A.M.E. Church, the Luke Waldron House occupies Lot 27 of the School-Lands development (*Figure 4*). The house is a five-bay, 1½-story, gambrel-roofed structure with a massive center chimney. Window sash throughout the main block of the house is wood, six-over-six, true divided light. Largely unaltered, the house is an excellent example of the small-scale gambrel-roof houses built in Newport just prior to the American Revolution.

James Taylor, a stone mason, acquired Lot 26 prior to 1780. In 1800, he sold the property with a dwelling house to Jonathan Lake of Newport. Lake, described alternately as a "grocer" and "victualler," left the house and the contiguous Lot 28 to his son Charles

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

in 1820.<sup>25</sup> The house was passed back and forth between Charles Lake, Israel Lake, and William Douglas until 1853, when Israel F. Lake sold it to Luke Waldron.<sup>26</sup> Born in New Hampshire, Waldron was the first pastor called to the Mount Zion A.M.E. Church on nearby Johnston Court. His tenure must have been short, because by the time the 1860 Federal Census was taken, Dorcas Waldron was listed as a widow with two children, 18-year-old James and 14-year-old Luke.<sup>27</sup> The Waldron family continued to occupy the house until 1883, when Dorcas sold it to James B. Cottrell, a stone cutter.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 4.** Luke Waldron House, 43 Warner Street (before 1777).



## A FREE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENCLAVE (1790 - 1840)

During the chaotic years of occupation numerous owners of School-Lands properties, including those who had fled Aquidneck Island, allowed their quit-rents to expire, inadvertently releasing the properties back to the Town. With the land gridded, mapped, and otherwise prepared for development, the Town elected to divest itself from the project.<sup>29</sup> At a Town Meeting on May 5, 1792, the freemen passed a resolution "authorizing and directing the Sale of all the Right, Title & Interest of said Town in and unto the New Town Lots (so called.)"<sup>30</sup> With Edmund Townsend acting as Town Treasurer, Newport proceeded to resell 33 lots over the course of two months.<sup>31</sup> The 33 lots were sold to a mere handful of speculators, most notably the mariner Daniel Holloway, who purchased 18 lots from the Treasurer.

Precisely when New Town began to serve as an enclave for free African-American settlement is not clear. The Revolution had dealt the Rhode Island's long-ingrained enslavement of Africans and African Americans a serious setback. Some of the enslaved had fought alongside Continental troops; others had deserted to the British or been carried off by the departing army.<sup>32</sup> Post-war slavery was also untenable for economic reasons; many owners of the enslaved could barely feed themselves, and consequently found emancipation an attractive option.

Between the beginning of the Revolution and 1800, the demographics of Newport's African-American community are difficult to trace. The 1774 military census had counted a total of 147 free African Americans and 1,069 enslaved.<sup>33</sup> That made for a total African-American population of 1,216 out of

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

an enumerated population of 9,209 (13.2%.) By 1782 the number of African Americans in Newport had dropped precipitously to 600, constituting 10.9% of the city's population of 5,530. This trend continued through 1790, when the first federal census counted only 640 persons of color out of 6,716, suggesting that the community had dwindled to 9.5% of the city's population.

The reasons for this decline are not easy to trace in a systematic fashion. In 1784 Rhode Island legislators passed a Gradual Emancipation Act. Contrary to portrayals of the Act in histories of Rhode Island, it did not provide wholesale freedom of the enslaved. Rather it mandated that any child born after April 1, 1784 would be considered free. Some owners, resigned to what they saw as an inevitable process, simply freed the enslaved members of their households. Others had disappeared earlier, either with the initial flight of patriot sympathizers or the more hurried departure of the British forces. Thus in the post-Revolutionary War era Newport's African Americans found themselves enmeshed in a complex web of legal, economic, and social strictures.

Ironically, in a mercantile society built upon the exploitation of other human beings, members of Rhode Island's African-American community had one option available to them not generally available in other states: that is, the franchise. Until state laws changed in the early 1820s, the right to vote in Rhode Island was determined not by race or ethnicity, but by the standard of property ownership. Thus African Americans negotiating the complex world of post-Revolutionary War Rhode Island had a powerful incentive for purchasing real estate: to take some measure of control over their increasingly challenging situation.

Between 1780 and 1820, at least nine African-American households can be identified in "New Town." These include Bacchus Coggeshall and Cuff Simmons (Lot 5); Hannah and Ann Gardner (a subdivision of Lot 5); Cezar and Catherine Potter (same as above); James Shilow or Shiloh (Lots 7 and 8); John and Sarah Chavers (Lot 18); John G. Moses (Lot 18); Cato Brindley and Cato Barker, who may be the same individual (Lot 24); and the Rodman family (Lot 26.) Because many of these individuals acquired property during the Revolution or just after the Revolution, the paper trail is nearly non-existent. Subsequent sales and movements can be traced, and contribute directly to an understanding of cultural change in Newport.

One of the earliest sub-settlements within New Town was the southern half of Block 2, comprising Lots 5, 6, 7, and 8. Lot 5, originally granted to William Crossing, was described in an 1816 transaction as "the land of Bacchus Coggeshall."<sup>34</sup> In 1830 an individual named Cuff Simmons sold this land to R. and G. Shaw with the dwelling house.<sup>35</sup> The western fifth of Lot 5 had been broken out into a separate lot fronting 21'8" on Pearl Street; in 1816, sisters Hannah and Ann Gardner granted a life lease on this property to Cezar and Catharine Potter for "the term of their natural lives and the life of the Survivor of them."<sup>36</sup>

Farther west across Block 2 stood perhaps the most unusual property in New Town. A brick, two-story, gambrel with end chimneys, the James Shilow House (demolished in the late 1930s) represents an unusual form of building for Newport at the turn of the nineteenth century (*Figure 5*). Born in Delaware around 1780, Shilow's title to this lot is not exactly clear. In 1798 Samuel Jeffers had sold Thomas G. Pitman all of Lots 7, 8, 11 and 12, comprising the west half of

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

Block 2. Pitman in turn, bequeathed the southerly lots (7 and 8) to his daughter Abby, who in turn sold them to George B. Hazard in 1844.<sup>37</sup> James Shilow must have obtained title to Lots 7 and 8 between 1844 and 1854, but the mechanism cannot yet be identified. As late as 1854, he split off a small strip from the eastern portion of Lots 7 and 8, selling it to Hannah Robinson for a nominal sum.<sup>38</sup>

On Block 3, construction of houses after the Revolution was considerably slower. The only lot associated with a free African-American family is a portion of Lot 18, at the northeast corner of the block. In 1825, John and Sarah Chavers deeded a house with approximately two-thirds of the lot to John G. Moses.<sup>39</sup> Block 4 has only two lots associated with a free African American. Lot 24, located at the southwestern corner of the block, had a house as early as 1766.<sup>40</sup> In the 1790s, it appears to have been owned by Cato Brinley.<sup>41</sup> In 1808 Cato Barker - who may or may not be the same individual - sold it to Jonathan Lake.<sup>42</sup> The 1808 deed does not mention any buildings. The present house is a 1970s reproduction of a typical eighteenth-century gambrel-roofed house. Lot 26, at the northeastern corner of the block, has an association with the Rodman family, prominent free African Americans associated with early African Union Society efforts in Newport. The Rodmans are listed as abutters in transactions from 1835 and 1856.<sup>43</sup> Two houses stand on this original lot, but they appear to date from after the turn of the twentieth century, long after the property had passed out of the hands of the Rodmans.

Despite the initial surge in African-American settlement in New Town, the area remained relatively unsettled throughout the first half of the nineteenth century (Table 2). The 1840

House Survey, conducted on a local level in conjunction with the federal census of that year, found only 15 houses in the neighborhood. Comparison with Table 1 suggests that only two houses from the School-Lands period survived to 1840 on their original lots: Lot 17, now owned and occupied by Daniel McAllister; and possibly Lot 13, which had had a slaughterhouse in 1774 and was now owned by Henry S. Simmons. The remaining 13 structures may have been "new" construction built after the 1760s.

**Figure 5.** James Shilow's House, Pearl Street (demolished in the late 1930s). *Painting by Helena Sturtevant, now owned by the City of Newport.*



**TABLE 1. HOUSES IN NEW TOWN, AUGUST 1840.<sup>44</sup>**

Lot	Resident	Owner	Address	Owner's Race
5	Cuff Simmons	Same	Spruce Street	African American
5	Hannah Gardner	Same	A Highway	African American
7 or 8	Daniel Bates	Thos J. Pitman	A Highway	EuroAmerican
6	Andrew D. Milne	G.B. Hazzard	Spruce Street	EuroAmerican
13 or 14	H.Simmons/D. Anderson	H. Simmons	Spruce Street	EuroAmerican
17	Daniel McAllister	Same	Spruce Street	EuroAmerican
53	Henry Johnson	Phillis Bissel	Spruce Street	African American
18	John G. Moses	G. Johnson Heirs	Spruce Street	African American
49	William H. Read	Same	A Highway	EuroAmerican
45	John Willson	Same	A Highway	African American
43	J. Greenman/M. Marshall	Ann Greenman	Spruce Street	EuroAmerican
39	William G. Irish	Albert Irish	Spruce Street	EuroAmerican
16	Patience Seixas	W.D. Stewart	A Highway	African American
16	Benjamin Hazzard	Same	A Highway	EuroAmerican
(?)	William Hall	William Hall	Spruce Street	EuroAmerican

If we approach these data from another angle, the story becomes more complex. The overall number of houses in New Town had increased by only two houses between 1774 and 1840. Yet of the 15 houses found in 1840, 13 or 14 of them had been built since the end of the Revolution. Although the density of the neighborhood had remained steady, construction and destruction must have proceeded at relatively high rates over the period of study. Thus prior to this survey there was little chance of houses surviving from the 1760s in present-day New Town; there was, however, a relatively high probability of identifying houses and structures associated with the period of free African-American settlement.

**Historical Properties Associated with the New Town Period**

Of the 15 structures identified in 1840 - and thus built between approximately 1780 and 1840 - five survive, in much altered forms. These include the **Bacchus Coggeshall House** (20 Kingston Avenue); the **Daniel Lyman/ Andrew Milne House** (now at 11 Third Street); the **Tryphena Wilson House** (23 Heath Street); the **Henry Johnson House** (now at 55-57 Kingston Avenue); and the **Daniel McAllister House** (50 Kingston Avenue.) Of these, only the Coggeshall House stands on a lot developed in the 1760s. The massing, scale, and style of this particular house all suggest that it is much more likely to have been built in the first two decades of the nineteenth century than in the School-Lands period. Thus it seems likely that no houses, other than the Luke Waldron House, survive in New Town from the first period of construction on

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

their original lots. Whether they survive in moved contexts is a matter for further discussion.

**Bacchus Coggeshall House (20 Kingston Avenue)**

Built by 1810, based on land evidence, the Bacchus Coggeshall House is a modest 1½-story, three-bay vernacular structure fronting on Spruce Street (Figure 6). The house is clapboarded on the front and back and shingled on the gable ends. The roof, punctured by two brick masonry stove chimneys, is currently covered with asphalt shingles. A central doorway has a simple casing with a six-light transom; windows on the main block of the house are six-over-six, wood, true-divided light with plain casings. Three dormers aligned with the first-story bays appear to be relatively recent additions. The house has a sprawling, flat-roofed addition with little character-defining detail extending to the west. An exact date of construction for the house is difficult to determine. Deeds from the first two decades of the nineteenth century refer to Lot 5 as “the land of Bacchus Coggeshall.”<sup>45</sup> By 1830 the property had

**Figure 6.** Bacchus Coggeshall House, 20 Kingston Avenue (ca. 1810?)



devolved to Cuff Simmons, a free African American laborer.<sup>46</sup> Simmons’ probate inventory, taken after his death in 1842, describes the arrangement of rooms in the house: two downstairs rooms, including a bedroom, a north chamber, and a south chamber.<sup>47</sup> The house was later owned by Edward Simmons, a prominent African-American blacksmith.

**Daniel Lyman/Andrew Milne House (formerly 28 Kingston Avenue)**

The house at 28 Kingston Avenue, a 2½ story, three-bay gable-end house with a substantial brick chimney, is a reproduction crafted by the Newport Restoration Foundation (NRF) in about 1970.<sup>48</sup> Now at 11 Third Street, the Daniel Lyman/Andrew Milne house (Figure 7) is a 1½-story, three-bay, gambrel roof structure similar to the Luke Waldron House on Warner Street. It has been meticulously restored by the NRF at its present location. Although no longer part of the study area, it serves as an excellent model for the type of house along Kingston Avenue during the New Town era.

**Figure 7.** Daniel Lyman/Andrew Milne House (11 Third Street, formerly 28 Kingston Avenue; ca. 1810)



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

**Tryphena Willson House (23 Heath Street)**

Located at 23 Heath Street in what was formerly Lot 45, the Tryphena Willson House, though much altered, retains stylistic elements of a house built at the turn of the nineteenth century (Figure 8). A three-bay, 2½-story gable-roofed structure, the house has a side entry with a broad, plain casing. Windows and doors have been altered considerably; the house, now wrapped in painted cedar shingles and sitting on a parged foundation, is difficult to read. A two-story porch over the entryway compounds this difficulty. The massing of the structure, its three-bay arrangement, and the steep pitch of the gable roof all point to an earlier date of construction than one might anticipate. Lot 45, a mid-block property on the south side of what is now Heath Street, was never sold during the initial sale of the School Lands. It was one of many lots acquired by mariner Daniel Holloway during the second wave of speculation in 1792.<sup>49</sup> Holloway was unable to sell this particular lot; it was part of his heirs' large-scale liquidation of property following his death in 1811.

**Figure 8.** Tryphena Willson House, 23 Heath Street (ca. 1810?)



Nicholas White bought Lot 45 from the Holloway heirs in 1811, and may have built the present house at that time.<sup>50</sup> Whether White, a heavy speculator in Newport property, actually lived in the house is unclear. In 1836 he sold the house to Augustus Henry Robbins, who in turn conveyed it to Tryphena Willson in 1838.<sup>51</sup> Although the house has a plaque commemorating a "Captain Tripp," there is no mention of a Tripp in any of the land evidence pertaining to the property.

**George and Henry Johnson House (55-57 Kingston Avenue)**

One of the most curious houses in the study area is that at 55-57 Kingston Avenue. A somewhat nondescript, two-story, shingled structure, the house has a shallow gable roof with six-over-six windows crowded up toward the eaves (Figure 9). The roof shows evidence of a break, as if two structures were combined to form the present structure. No entrances survive on the Kingston Avenue side, but

**Figure 9.** George and Henry Johnson House, 55-57 Kingston Avenue (before 1815).



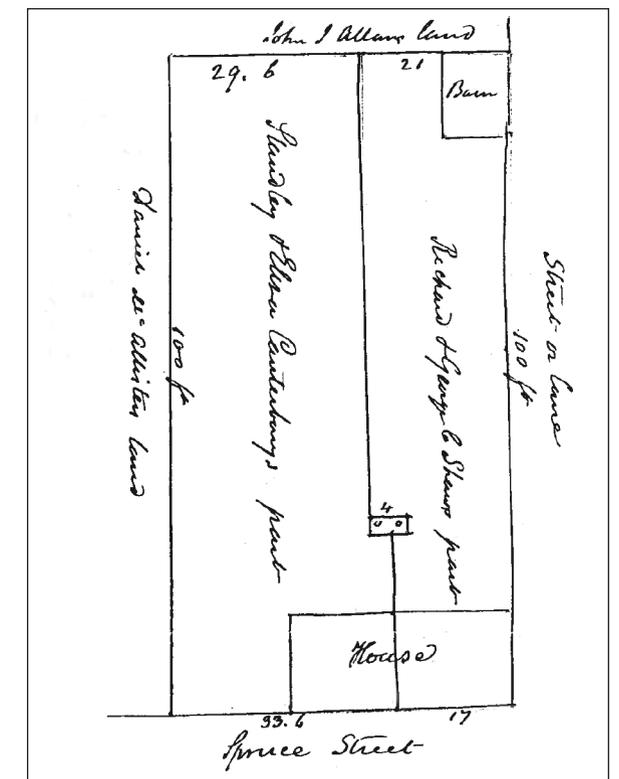
From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

two are present on the east side, opening into what is now the back yard. There is some evidence, through a complicated lawsuit of the late 1830s, that this structure may be George Johnson's house that originally occupied Lot 18, directly across Kingston Avenue.<sup>52</sup> If so, then it dates from at least 1815, when Johnson wrote his last will and testament. After George Johnson's death in 1816, Lots 17 and 18 fell to his son Benjamin.<sup>53</sup> In 1834, Benjamin Johnson then sold the two lots to his son George and his wife Eliza.<sup>54</sup> At that time a lawsuit arose between George and Eliza Shaw and John G. Moses, who may have been acting in right of one of the late George Johnson's daughters. As the case dragged on, George and Eliza Johnson hired Richard and George Shaw to be their attorneys in the matter, and executed a quitclaim to part of the property for their legal fees.<sup>55</sup> To make matters even more complicated, George and Eliza Johnson apparently divorced, with Eliza immediately marrying Stanley Canterbury. Thus in 1844, the lawsuit was finally resolved with a strict division of the property between Richard and George Shaw and Stanley and Eliza Canterbury (Figure 10). By the 1850s, the house had devolved back to the Johnson family; Henry Johnson is listed as a 57-year-old farmer in the 1860 Federal census of Newport, along with his wife Catharine and five sons ranging in age from 12 to 21.<sup>56</sup> Henry Johnson died between 1860 and 1870; the Newport City Directory of 1870 found only Kate Johnson, widow of Henry in the house.<sup>57</sup>

A case can be made that the house now on Lot 53 was moved from Lot 18 after the resolution of the lawsuit in 1844. The house has a break in its roof at a point similar to that depicted, suggesting a convenient line of division. Further-more, the house is placed in a curious position on the lot, with no doors facing

Spruce Street or Johnson Court. Both these circumstances suggest that the house was simply brought directly across the street from Lot 18 and never rotated back around into position. A new door may have been cut in on the south side at this time.

**Figure 10.** Division of Property between the Shaws and Canterburys, 1844.<sup>58</sup> Note that even the privy is divided down the middle.



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

**Daniel McAllister House  
(50 Kingston Avenue)**

A 1½-story, side entrance, gable-front house, the Daniel McAllister House has been altered considerably, especially in terms of its massing (*Figure 11*). A series of additions lengthening the house have rendered the original block of the house difficult to determine. With its nine-over-six sash and its heavy door casing with three-light sidelights, the house does retain some characteristics of an early Greek Revival cottage.

The property, Lot 17 of the School-Lands, was in the ownership of George Johnson when he wrote his will in 1815. A dispute among the heirs led to its sale at an auction in 1837. The property was then sold to Daniel McAllister in 1838; he may have built the present house shortly thereafter, because it appears in the 1840 house census.<sup>59</sup> Although altered, its appearance along the streetscape retains the feeling of a small workers' cottage from the period.

**Figure 11.** Daniel McAllister House, 50 Kingston Avenue (before 1840).



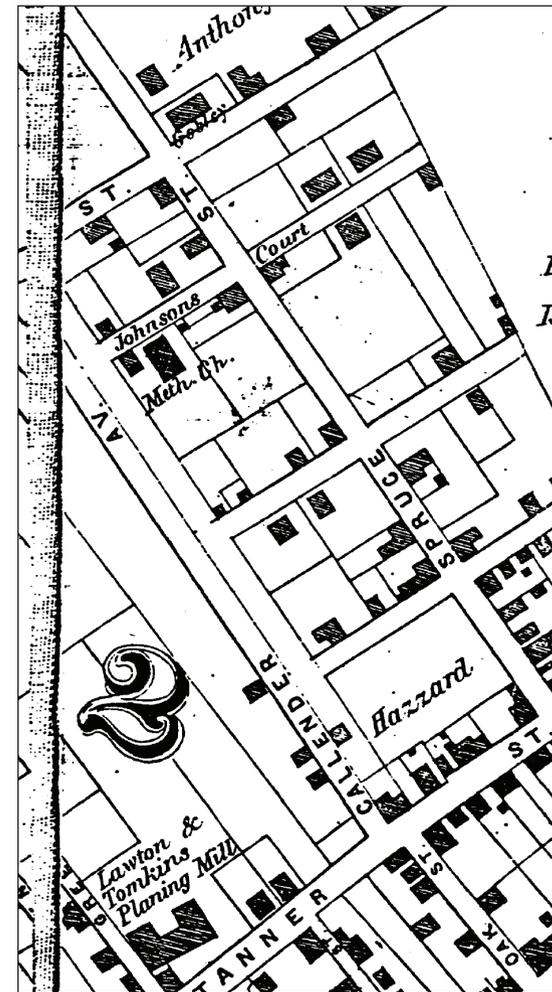
**IRISH AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
IMMIGRATION, 1840 - 1890**

Between 1840 and 1870, New Town experienced the most intensive construction phase in its history. Two waves of immigrants fueled this expansion: refugees from the famine in Ireland, and newly freed African Americans from the American South. Both groups found New Town attractive for the same reasons: affordable housing, proximity to employment (especially the waterfront) and ready access to commercial and community services along Broadway.

Systematic review of land evidence suggests that speculation in New Town lots was popular in the decade preceding the Civil War. The 1859 Dripps Map (*Figure 12*) is an excellent indication of how New Town's sudden growth. Where the 1840 House Survey had found 16 houses in the study area, the Dripps map shows a total of 45 houses and one church - the African M.E. Church, discussed below, which may be eligible individually for inclusion in the NRHP under Criteria A and B. Construction of the Lawton and Tomkins Planing Mill three streets to the west, at the corner of Green Lane (now Tilden Street) and Tanner Street provided an important impetus to development of New Town. In addition to essential construction elements like sheathing and clapboards, Lawton and Tomkins produced stair and porch balusters, window and door casings, and cedar shingles. Builders found the combination of open lots of land and easily-available building supplies extremely attractive. Between 1860 and 1880, the Spruce Street courts were connected with newly-laid out Pond Avenue to the west and Callender Avenue, a former farm lane, to the east. West of Callender Avenue, Burnside Avenue and Green Lane were developed during the same period.

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

**Figure 12.** Detail of the Dripps Map of Newport (1859), showing the development of Spruce Street (now Kingston Avenue) and the courts.



Who were these new immigrants to Newport? The Irish had initially come as masons and laborers in the construction of Fort Adams, in the early 1840s, and later as servants in the cottages and mansions along Bellevue Avenue. As early as 1828, a circuit-riding priest from Boston had noted increasing numbers of Irish Roman Catholics at the coal mine in Portsmouth

and at "the government works" (i.e., Fort Adams) in Newport.<sup>60</sup> In 1828, the Diocese of Boston established the parish of St. Joseph on the side of Broadway opposite New Town, reflecting the substantial increase in Roman Catholics.<sup>61</sup> This led in turn to Our Lady of the Isle (later St. Mary) Parish, housed in a massive brownstone church at the corner of Spring Street and Bath Road. By the 1870s, occasional Newport Mercury articles refer to New Town as "Kerry Hill," indicating the extent of Irish settlement in the area.

Despite the influx of immigrants abroad, the study area remained a multicultural neighborhood. Remaining members of the African-American community that had settled New Town at the turn of the nineteenth century saw their numbers bolstered by newly-freed African Americans from the American South. Myra Armstead notes that by 1870, one-third of the African-American population of Newport was from the South.<sup>62</sup> A particular locus of departure was Culpeper County, Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley:

*The Virginia to Newport immigration stream was facilitated by a well-established labor recruitment chain and accessible transportation, two factors typical of the African-American immigration experience. Newport's Virginia labor-recruitment target area was seemingly quite particular: Culpeper County in northern Virginia... As early as 1860, Armstead Hurley, a native of Culpeper County, had come to Newport at the age of thirty-two as a carpenter and a glazier.<sup>63</sup>*

In a form of chain migration, men would be recruited for work in Newport's service sector; after they had established themselves in communities like New Town, they would send back for wives, children,

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

and members of extended families.

Despite the proximity of Irish and African-American immigrants, examination of the 1865 Rhode Island Census and the 1870 Federal Census did not identify any examples of households in which both groups were represented. Such an arrangement may have been considered a crossing of social boundaries, even in Newport. Consideration of the census does reveal that Spruce Street and the neighboring courts were thoroughly mixed, with new Irish immigrants, Irish Americans, and African Americans living and working side by side.

Houses associated with free African Americans, particularly those who had fled the American South, are numerous. The John Henson Fisher House (ca. 1855, a modest 1½-story structure at the northwest corner of Kingston Avenue and Johnston Court, is an excellent example of the small-scale housing built during this era. Other houses, such as the John Nichols House, are more curious in their configurations. Properties associated with Irish and Irish Americans were more commonly new construction, with the most popular form a 2½-story, gable-front, side-entrance structure. Built largely between 1870 and 1890, these multifamily houses - many of which have small-scale details derived from the Queen Anne or "Modern Colonial" style, are quite common throughout the study area and the adjacent streets.

**Historical Properties Associated with the African-American Migration A.M.E. Church (3 Johnson Court)**

As noted above, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, as the first church constructed by African Americans in Newport,<sup>64</sup> may well be individually eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic

Places (*Figure 13*). Like most African-American churches in Newport, the congregation's history can be traced back to the fraternal organizations of the early nineteenth century: the African Union Society (1780), the African Benevolent Society (1808), and the Colored Union Church and Society (1823). The A.M.E. Church began meeting in a carpenter's shop on Division Street in 1845 before moving to a rented building on Green Lane (now Tilden Avenue.)

By 1851, the A.M.E. congregation required its own building. In that year George Hazard sold William Wor, John Johnson, and James Shiloe New Town Lot 19.<sup>65</sup> Wor, Johnson, and Shiloe are identified in the document as Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; the Trustees were to "cause to be built a house or place of worship for the use of the members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church" on the lot. The indenture also notes that the Trustees shall "... at all times forever hereafter, permit such Ministers and Preachers belonging to said Church ... to preach and expound God's Holy word therein."

**Figure 13.** A.M.E. Church, 3 Johnson Court (1851-53).



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

The A.M.E. congregation remained at Johnson Court for more than two decades. Charles Battle noted that beginning in 1858, a Miss Palmer kept a school for African-American children "on the corner of Kingston Avenue and Johnson Court."<sup>66</sup> The exact location is not known, but the church seems a logical candidate. The A.M.E. church remained at Johnson Court until 1875, when it purchased the dining room of the Ocean House on Bellevue Avenue for its estimated congregation of 350.<sup>67</sup> Sold to the McMahon family in 1883, the Johnson Court building then became a two-family residence and has remained so to the present day.<sup>68</sup>

A two-story structure with a broad gable front facing Johnson Court, the church retains an exterior largely unaltered from its original construction between 1851 and 1853. Clad on the street side in clapboard, the structure's remaining three sides are painted shingle. Although the windows have been replaced with double-pane sash the openings, cased in plain boards, appear to be original. A dormer added to the west side is of relatively recent vintage. A recent study of the building indicated that although its interior is partitioned down the middle, the building largely retains the feel of an open assembly hall.<sup>69</sup> A wide staircase to the second floor, now partitioned, may provide evidence of a choir loft.

The church surely served as a focal point for African Americans in the Spruce Street/Kingston Avenue neighborhood. Its ministers and trustees lived within a block or two of the Johnson Court building. The 3 Johnson Court property has broader significance in Newport: its construction predated the Union Congregational Church on Division Street by two decades; it is thus the earliest church building in Newport built by and for African Americans. The

building is worth further study and evaluation for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Peter Wheelbanks' Slaughter House (8 Johnson Court)**

A severely altered two-story linear structure, the Peter Wheelbanks' slaughter house has been converted to residential use for some time (*Figure 14*). The structure appears in the 1975 RIHPC data sheet as a typical one-and-a-half-story cottage. Between 1975 and the present, it was added to vertically and horizontally, resulting in its present configuration.

The structure is associated with Peter Wheelbanks, an African-American grocer born in Pennsylvania or Virginia. Wheelbanks purchased the property, which comprises the west half of Lot 21, from Samuel Moses in 1860.<sup>70</sup>

After Wheelbanks' death between 1860 and 1876, the structure passed to Samuel Brown by the will of his widow, Sarah Wheelbanks.<sup>71</sup> It may have been

**Figure 14.** Peter Wheelbanks' Slaughter House, 8 Johnson Court (ca. 1860).



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

converted to a residential structure by 1929, when Samuel Brown sold it to Marie McCastor and Julia L. Black.<sup>72</sup> Although altered, the structure retains its historical associations with Wheelbanks, a prominent grocer who advertised extensively in Newport city directories of the 1860s and 1870s.

**John Henson Fisher House  
(10 Johnson Court)**

Located at the northwest corner of Kingston Avenue and Johnson Court, the John Henson Fisher House sits on the eastern half of Lot 21 (*Figure 15*). By 1850 Samuel Moses had acquired this property through a complicated lawsuit involving the estate of the George Johnson. Moses divided the lot exactly in half; he sold the east half, with a newly-constructed dwelling house, to John H. Fisher in 1855.<sup>73</sup> The west half was sold to African-American butcher Peter Wheelbanks (see above).<sup>74</sup> The Fisher house is an elegant example of small-scale vernacular building in Newport. Three bays wide and one room deep, the 1½-story house has two consecutive additions

**Figure 15.** John H. Fisher House, 10 Johnson Court (1850-55).



extending to the north. Character-defining features include two-over-two sash on the first floor, paired windows in the gable end, and simple, Greek-revival-influenced roof returns.

Despite its size, the Fisher house was fully occupied when the enumerator for the 1860 Federal census appeared.<sup>75</sup> The enumerator found the 28-year-old Fisher; his wife Elizabeth, born in New York; three children, the eldest of whom had been born in New York in 1854; Elijah Wallace, an 11-year-old whose relationship to the family cannot be determined; and Fisher's 18-year-old brother Anthony, also born in Maryland and employed as a waiter. It seems clear that Fisher and his brother had made their way from Maryland to New York, and the entire family from New York to Newport between 1854 and 1855. Whether the family had always been free in Maryland or whether the Fishers had been recently freed or escaped enslavement cannot be determined. They disappear from the documentary record between 1880 and 1900, although both John and Elizabeth Fisher are buried in the nearby Common Burying Ground.

**John Nichols House (29 Kingston Avenue)**

Recently remodeled by the Church Community Corporation, the John Nichols House is a curious hybrid (*Figure 16*). From Kingston Avenue, the house appears to be a gable-front, side entrance structure with a steeply-pitched roof. As one walks around to the south side, it is clear that a nearly complete five-bay Georgian house has been attached to the front portion of the house, forming a single structure out of two components.

Lot 40 was never built on in the School-Lands era. In 1814 the Town of Newport sold it to John Williams.<sup>76</sup>

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

An agreement made between Williams and Jedediah Irish required Irish

*to make and maintain a good and sufficient fence between the lots of Jedediah Irish and John Williams upon the lot belonging to Jedediah commonly called the Orchard Lot ... John Williams on his part agrees to pay to Jedediah 20 cords of stones and \$80.00 for making and maintaining the fence forever.*<sup>77</sup>

This agreement provides land-use information depicting the study area as open with orchards and stone walls, rather than wooden fences. Whether or not the fence was constructed, Lot 40 stood vacant until 1856, when John Nichols bought it from George B. Hazard.<sup>78</sup> The roof line of the Georgian house has been cut to fit the front; it seems clear that Nichols, identified in the 1860 Federal Census as a "mulatto" born in Cuba, dragged in an earlier house and attached it to his new construction. Like the James Brett House, described below, the Nichols House may

**Figure 16.** John Nichols House, 29 Kingston Avenue (after 1856).



be evidence of the types of dwellings built during the School Lands period.

**Joseph T. Ray House (30 Kingston Avenue)**

The Joseph T. Ray house is one of the best preserved in the study area (*Figure 17*). The main block of the house is only two bays deep; a flat-roofed addition extends to the north and west. Wooden six-over-six windows and a small arched window in the gable are all part of the original fabric, as is the handsome door surround with an overhanging flat-topped pediment.

The house's date of construction is difficult to determine. In 1827 David Buffum sold three lots - one with a house - to Edward Simmons.<sup>79</sup> Simmons flipped the lots to John Barker on the same day.<sup>80</sup> In 1868, Thomas Coggeshall bought the lots with a dwelling house for \$950.00 in unpaid taxes.<sup>81</sup> Joseph T. Ray, who eventually bought the house, is recorded as living here as early as 1880. The property then passed to Constant Smith in 1893; Smith subdivided the lots, selling 30 Kingston Avenue to Ray in 1893.<sup>82</sup> Joseph T. Ray was a

**Figure 17.** Joseph T. Ray House, 30 Kingston Avenue (1868-1870).



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

compelling and important figure in New Town. Born in Bristol, Rhode Island in 1847, Ray enlisted in the Union Army and was stationed in Texas.<sup>83</sup> He returned to Newport and became the first African-American member of the newly-formed Newport Police Department. At the time of his death in 1943, Ray was the oldest living Civil War veteran in Newport (*Figure 18*).



**Figure 18.** Joseph T. Ray in an undated photo that accompanied his 1943 obituary in the Newport Mercury.

**Benjamin Bryer House (40 Kingston Avenue)**

A 2½-story, gable front structure with a cement storefront, this house has been greatly altered through the introduction of aluminum siding and replacement windows (*Figure 19*). Seams in the siding and the overall massing and configuration of the house suggest that it may be an earlier structure raised to accommodate the storefront, an extremely common phenomenon in Newport. Its exact date of construction is difficult to determine.

**Figure 19.** Benjamin Bryer House, 40 Kingston Avenue (possibly by 1818).



The house sits on Lot 13 of the School Lands. In 1818 Hazard Bush, an African-American laborer, sold Henry S. Simmons Lot 13 and Lot 14, which borders Lot 13 to the north, with a dwelling house.<sup>84</sup> Subsequent owners include William B. Smith, Patrick Halpin, and Benjamin Bryer, described in city directories from the 1860s and 1870s as a grocer. From exterior inspection, it is unclear whether the present structure incorporates the house present in 1818. As a surviving storefront, it is important to defining the urban mixed commercial and residential quality of the study area in the nineteenth century, and should be considered a contributing property to a potential district.

**Nancy Eldredge House (14 Pearl Street)**

The early history of 14 Pearl Street - Lot 39 of the School Lands — is difficult to resolve. Lot 39, with its shorter axis fronting on Spruce Street, had been subdivided at the turn of the nineteenth century, when the Melville family occupied the lot. Land evidence suggests that the lot was split almost evenly, with 54 feet on the western half, 46 feet on the eastern half, and a narrow alley running between the two. The

**Figure 20.** Nancy Eldridge House, 14 Pearl Street (1865-1876).



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

Melvilles had a dwelling house on the western half of the lot, as evidenced by an 1833 deed in which the widow Clarissa Melville sold this portion to David M. Burdick of Newport.<sup>85</sup> The two portions were recombined in 1837, when Albert Irish bought them from Burdick and Peleg Clarke, respectively.<sup>86</sup> The dwelling house is shown on the 1859 Dripps map of Newport, but must have disappeared between then and 1865, when Irish sold the property to Nancy Eldridge with no buildings mentioned.<sup>87</sup> The Melville house may have been moved one lot north to John Nichols property (see above).

Nancy Eldridge, an African-American “single woman” born in Virginia, built the 1½-story, mansard-roof cottage that stands on the lot today between 1865 and 1876 (*Figure 20*). In 1876, Eldridge re-divided the lot and sold the eastern half to Diana Weeden. The subdivision and sale of the east half of the lot speaks to the networks of mutuality among the African-American community, an interpretation borne out by the terms of Nancy Eldridge’s will. Written on August 16, 1876, the will specifies that Eldridge’s property will go to Ann Elizabeth Fairweather, the daughter of her neighbors Edward and Elizabeth Simmons. Perhaps this gift was recognition of care provided for the aged Nancy Eldridge. Of even greater importance is her disposition of personal possessions:

*Thirdly. I give and bequeath to Malicia Perry daughter of George Perry my bed now in the chambers. I give to Susan Weeden the black chairs and rockers, the same having been loaned to me by her; I give to George Perry the large looking glass in my room, the same having been loaned to me by him; I give to Margaret Jackson a Sofa which she loaned to me.*

These bequests suggest a rich context of inter-related families: Nancy Eldridge, Susan Weeden, George and Malicia Perry, Margaret Jackson. The will of Nancy Eldridge reflects close-knit, kin-based support network, one that may have been typical of those that flourished in New Town during the last half of the nineteenth century. Susan Weeden, for example, was the daughter of neighbor Diana Weeden, an African Canadian from Pictou, Nova Scotia. Margaret Jackson lived two houses south of Nancy Eldridge at the house of her son-in-law, Thomas Jones. The Perry family rented property on the other end of Pearl Street.

The subsequent history of the property bears these trends out further. As noted above, Nancy Eldridge bequeathed the house to Annie E. Fairweather, who in turn bequeathed it to her children. In 1914 the heirs sold the property to Constant Smith, a prominent landlord in Kerry Hill. By 1930, it was a rental property. On the first floor lived George E. Carter, a chauffeur, and his wife Martha; on the second floor was Mrs. Harriet Perry, daughter-in-law of the Malicia Perry who had lent Nancy Eldridge a bed six decades earlier.<sup>88</sup> Community ties within New Town ran very close together indeed.

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern end of Newport, RI.

## HISTORICAL PROPERTIES ASSOCIATED WITH IRISH IMMIGRATION

### James Brett House (35 Kingston Avenue)

The James Brett House is an unusual early structure that may have been moved to its present lot from a nearby property. It was constructed as a three-bay, side entrance house, a common Newport form in the first half of the eighteenth century. The present house is an asymmetrical, 2½-story, four-bay structure fronting Spruce Street and sitting on a brick and cement foundation (Figure 21). The house is sided in shingles on all four sides; windows are two-over-two, double-hung wood sash windows. A stove chimney provides the only venting. The doorway casing is of simple pilasters, uncapped, with a handsome dentil course capped by a crown molding.

James Brett, an Irish-born stonemason, purchased Lot 43 from Ann Greenman in 1846.<sup>89</sup> Five years later, having divorced his wife, Brett executed a document

naming George B. Hazard as Trustee of the property.<sup>90</sup> Hazard would serve as the landlord for the property, directing funds into an alimony trust for Brett's wife. Upon his death in 1855, Brett disinherited his former wife, leaving the property to Father William O'Reilly, pastor of Our Lady of the Isle (now St. Mary Church) for the benefit of orphans.<sup>91</sup> Nearly a decade later Father O'Reilly, now engaged in the project of building the present St. Mary Church, mortgaged Lot 43 to one Michael Maguire of Boston.<sup>92</sup> Although a fellow countryman, Maguire apparently felt no compunctions about foreclosing on the property in 1869 when Father O'Reilly was unable to make the payments.<sup>93</sup>

Lot 43 was later subdivided, with the Brett House sold to John and Margaret Kelly in 1872.<sup>94</sup> The Kellys maintained it as a rental property for nearly 30 years until they in turn sold it to George and Lavinia Butler, an African-American family from Virginia.<sup>95</sup> Thus the property fits almost every context described in this report and though altered, would be one of the keystones of a proposed National Register district.

**Figure 21.** James Brett House, 35 Kingston Avenue (moved before 1851).



**Figure 22.** Eugene J. O'Connell House, 38 Kingston Avenue (1872-75).



**Figure 23.** Michael Harris House, 65 Kingston Avenue (1874-76).



### Eugene J. O'Connell House (39 Kingston Avenue)

Located at the southeast corner of Kingston Avenue and Heath Court, the O'Connell House was built at almost exactly the same time as the Harris House (between 1872 and 1875.) The O'Connell House, although retaining the 2½-story, gable-front, side entrance plan, is much less elaborate, however (Figure 22). Character-defining details are few; although window and door casings appear to be original, the house has been completely wrapped in painted shingles.

Despite its lack of architectural detail, the house has important historical associations with its first owner, Eugene J. O'Connell. O'Connell founded an empire based on the wholesaling of lumber, an establishment that grew into a present-day corporation encompassing Newport Oil Company, the Newport Yachting Center, and Castle Hill Resort. His story typifies the Irish experience in Newport, with immigrants rising in class position in each successive generation.

### Michael Harris House (65 Kingston Avenue)

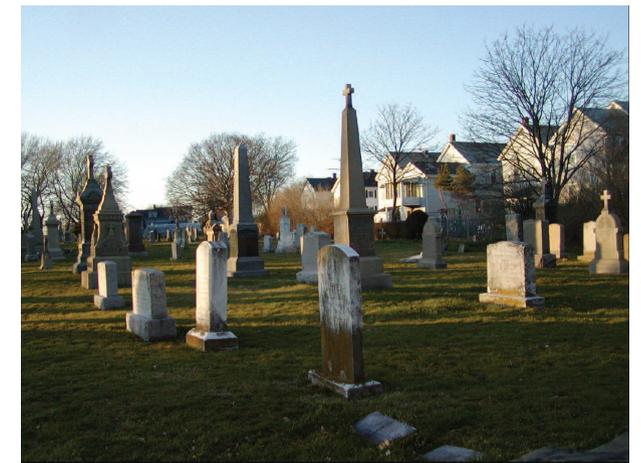
Built between 1874 and 1876, the Michael Harris House is an exceptionally well-preserved example of the type of housing built for Irish immigrants and Irish Americans (Figure 23). Occupying part of Lot 58, the house was built by Michael Harris shortly after he acquired the property in 1874.<sup>96</sup> The property stayed in the Harris family until 1913, when it was sold to Elix Adelson, a local landlord with numerous properties in the study area.<sup>97</sup> A small-scale vernacular Queen Anne, the 2½-story gable-front house retains several picturesque details, including the second-story overhang and bracket, fish-scale shingles at the bottom of the second story, and a three-sided bay window on the first floor.

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern end of Newport, RI.

### St. Mary Cemetery (Warner Street between Vicksburg Place and Pond Avenue)

Prior to the establishment of Our Lady of the Isle (now St. Mary) Church in 1853, Roman Catholics worshipped and buried their dead on property located at the corner of Barney and Mount Vernon streets. St. Mary Cemetery, the second Roman Catholic cemetery in Newport, was established by the beginning of the Civil War. The cemetery, now closed for burial but maintained by the Diocese, is an incomparable resource for the genealogy of Newport's Irish American community (Figure 24). Next-of-kin frequently chose inscriptions referring to the county and parish of the decedent's birth in Ireland. The cemetery would be a contributing resource to any proposed National Register district.

**Figure 24.** St. Mary Cemetery, Warner Street (ca. 1860).



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

**PORTUGUESE, CAPE VERDEAN,  
AND MEDITERRANEAN  
IMMIGRATION, 1890-1920**

Between 1890 and 1920, the cultural character of what was now known as Kerry Hill shifted yet again. Many second-generation Irish Americans left the area and moved farther south, establishing a substantial presence at the lower end of Thames Street. Soon to be known as the Fifth Ward, this area had so many Irish and Irish American citizens that by 1911 the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence had established St. Augustin Church to serve the needs of local residents. Although some Irish Americans continued to live in Kerry Hill, Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Italian immigrants are increasingly visible in the city directories by the turn of the century. Many contemporary residents of the study area trace their ancestry to this final wave of immigration into Newport.

**Figure 25.** Detail of the 1895 Everts and Richards Map of Newport.



Relatively few of these new residents purchased real estate in the study area before 1920. Their presence has to be traced out systematically through review of city directories. Interestingly, several Irish Americans - Martin Shay, Patrick Horgan, and others - continued to build and maintain multi-family houses, renting them to immigrant families. By 1895 Kingston Avenue and the courts had been almost completely built out (*Figure 25*), with few vacant lots remaining in the entire study area.

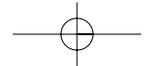
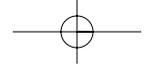
**Properties Associated with Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Mediterranean Immigration**

As noted above, immigrants during this period of Kerry Hill's history undertook relatively little new construction on their own. Preliminary survey indicates that they lived in virtually all of the properties described under previous contexts. Three in particular are potentially important: the **Riggs and Booth Tenement** (16 Johnson Court) and the **Benjamin Hazard Cottages** (41 and 41½ Warner Street), and the **Shiloh Court Cottages** (1-4 Shiloh Court).

**Riggs and Booth Tenement  
(16 Johnson Court)**

Built in 1903 by African-American real estate speculator Edward O. Riggs and his partner, William Booth, this unusual structure is a three-bay, three-story, flat-roofed structure with an entrance at the southeast corner (*Figure 26*). Review of the 1910 and 1920 Federal Census suggests that the two rented it to a series of Cape Verdean families, most of whom were employed in the railroad or on the steamboat docks.<sup>98</sup>

Until recently the Riggs and Booth Tenement was a derelict shell that was in danger of demolition. Originally sheathed in clapboard on the first floor and wooden shingles on the second, it has been



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

rehabilitated with unsympathetic windows and siding. It does, however, maintain its massing and overall feeling.

**Benjamin Hazard Cottages  
(41 and 41½ Warner Street)**

Built in one event between 1895 and 1903, these are two 1½-story, gable-front, side entrance cottages typical of construction in the study area at the turn of the 20th century (*Figure 27*). They were built as speculative rental properties by Benjamin Hazard, a prominent real estate agent in Newport. The cottages are relatively well-preserved, retaining their massing and their aspect to the street; 41 Warner Street is presently undergoing a partial restoration and a partial renovation, involving the alteration of original window openings. City directories indicate that a succession of Italian and Italian-American families occupied these properties through the 1920s. Tenure seems to have been brief, as no family appears more than three years in succession.

**Figure 26.** Riggs and Booth Tenement, 16 Johnson Court (1903; altered 2001.)



**Shiloh Court Houses (1-4 Shiloh Court)**



Built between 1888 and 1895, these four small cottages stand on what was James Shilow's property at the west end of Pearl Street

(formerly Spruce Court.) These are 1½-story, gable-roofed structures with slightly overhanging eaves and windows placed squarely in the center of the upper story. Entrances to the houses are at the southeastern corner; most have been altered slightly but taken together, they are an excellent representation of workers' cottages built throughout Newport at this time.

**Figure 27.** Benjamin Hazard Cottages, 41 and 41½ Warner Street (1895-1903).



From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

**TOWARD A NATIONAL REGISTER  
NOMINATION FOR THE SCHOOL  
LANDS/NEW TOWN/KERRY HILL**

Kerry Hill's slide into a perception of disreputability from the 1950s onward was paramount in the preservation of its building stock. Although the urban neighborhood's character has been compromised by the loss of institutions (like the A.M.E. Church) and commercial establishments (i.e., the numerous small stores and businesses), the setting and feeling of the neighborhood remain largely intact. The setting and feeling are conveyed in two ways: first, by the character of the surviving architecture, and second, by the pattern of streets, courts,

**Figure 28.** Unsympathetic New Construction, Callendar Avenue and Heath Court.



and lots. Although structures have come and gone along Kingston Avenue, many of the present lots are of the same dimensions and in the same configuration as they were when originally surveyed in 1763.

Currently the real estate market brings extreme pressure on the study area. Once avoided by the real estate market, and thus preserved, the neighborhood is now seen as highly desirable for its proximity to downtown Newport and its attractions. The market has created cultural erosion, with the demographic shifting toward relatively prosperous white newcomers to the neighborhood; it has also fueled a spate of new construction, little of which is sympathetic to the architectural and historical character of the neighborhood (Figure 28). The area is under no protection from the local Historic District. Furthermore, more than half of it (primarily along the easterly side of Kingston Avenue) is not included in the otherwise vast Newport National Historic Landmark District (NHLD).

The study area may certainly be eligible for inclusion in the Newport NHLD. It may also be eligible under Criteria A and C as its own specific district, under three of the historic contexts or themes used as a means of organizing this essay: the settlement of the area as part of the "School-Lands" project (1763-1774), the development of an enclave of free African-American settlement (1790-1840), and Irish immigration and the Great Migration (1840-1890.) Further study and refinement of historical and architectural data would be needed to determine whether the theme of Portuguese, Cape Verdean, and Mediterranean immigration (1890-1920) might contribute to the eligibility of the study area.

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

At minimum, expansion of the existing NHLD is desirable for two reasons. First, the action would recognize specific contributions of African-Americans, Irish and Irish Americans, and other communities to Newport's rich historical legacy. Sites associated with these groups, especially dwellings and neighborhoods, are poorly recognized in Newport. On a more pragmatic level, the recogni-

tion would make property owners eligible for historic preservation tax credits, and might lead to a higher level of stewardship for these important properties. Many of the specific historic properties identified during the course of the survey are of significance because they are able to contribute to more than one of the themes identified here (Table 3).

**TABLE 3. CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES AND CONTEXTS  
IN THE STUDY AREA**

Property	School-Lands	New Town	Kerry Hill	20th-Century
Luke Waldron House	X	X	X	
Bacchus Coggeshall House		X	X	
Daniel Lyman House		X		
Tryphena Willson House		X	X	
George Johnson House	X?	X	X	
Daniel McAllister House		X	X	
Mount Zion A.M.E. Church		X	X	
John Nichols House		X	X	
Nancy Eldridge House		X	X	
Benjamin Bryer House	X?	X	X	
John H. Fisher House		X	X	
Joseph T. Ray House		X	X	X
Peter Wheelbanks SH			X	X
James Brett House		X	X	X
Michael Harris House			X	X
E.J. O'Connell House			X	X
St. Mary Cemetery			X	X
Riggs and Booth Tenement				X
41 Warner Street				X
41½ Warner Street				X
Shiloh Court Houses (1-4)				X

If we approach these data from another angle, the story becomes more complex. The overall number of houses in New Town had increased by only two houses between 1774 and 1840. Yet of the 15 houses found in 1840, 13 or 14 of them had been built since the end of the Revolution. Although the density of the neighborhood had remained steady, construction and destruction must have proceeded at relatively high rates over the period of study. Thus prior to this survey there was little chance of houses surviving from the 1760s in present-day New Town; there was, however, a relatively high probability of identifying houses and structures associated with the period of free African-American settlement.

From the School-Lands to Kerry Hill:  
Two Centuries of Urban Development at the Northern End of Newport, R.I.

### Recommended Additional Survey

Before defining boundaries of a potential district, further survey is recommended to the west of the study area, encompassing Callendar and Burnside Avenues. Although these areas developed after the Civil War, their histories are likely to support the theme of Irish Immigration and African-American Immigration. They are almost certainly likely to contribute to a nomination for a National Register District.

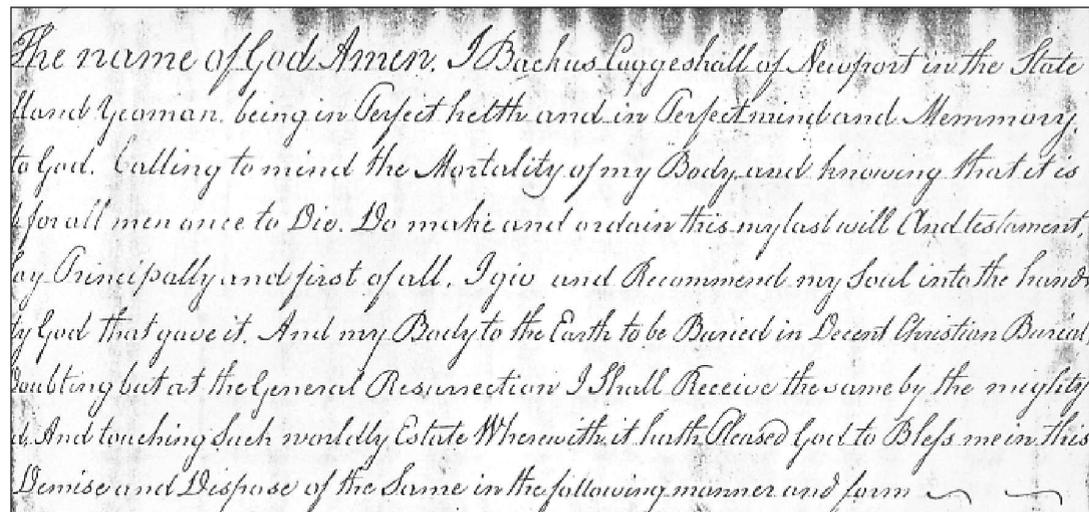
### Final Thoughts

A newly-freed African American woman in post-Revolutionary War Newport faced certain challenges in staking out her new life, as did an Irish family fleeing the Famine of 1847, an African-American woman moving to Newport from Virginia, and a Portuguese laborer arriving from Sao Miguel. For more than two centuries the four block-long stretch of Kingston Avenue and its courts served as the first home for members of all of these groups. They built churches, blacksmith's shops, grocery stores; they gathered on front porches and talked; they watched and waited for the opportunity to leave this particular neighborhood for their own home, a new home in the Fifth

Ward, or Outer Broadway, or in the suburbs.

Still the houses stand, in silent witness to centuries of different owners and tenants. In March 2002, the Riggs and Booth tenement, home to literally dozens of Cape Verdeans in 1920, stands newly refurbished and awaiting its next owner. The house of Bacchus Coggeshall has a new coat of seafoam green paint, and a burgundy trimboard. George and Henry Johnson's house, dragged across Kingston Avenue at the end of a decade of legal wrangling, stands in its awkward position, rear façade toward the street and facing all 100 feet of its original lot.

Surely Newport is more than carefully restored colonial homes on the Point, stylish villas in the Kay-Catherine-Old Beach Road district, the "white elephants" along Bellevue and Ochre Point avenues. Surely there is room to commemorate this slightly dilapidated but evocative collection of nineteenth-century houses, storefronts, and multi-family dwellings. We owe that commemoration to people like Bacchus Coggeshall, who was born into slavery but died free; we owe it to ourselves not to forget.



## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This essay originated as a Certified Local Government grant from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission to the City of Newport in December 2000. I am grateful to the following individuals for their assistance with this project: Bert Lippincott (Newport Historical Society); Guy Weston (City of Newport Zoning Officer); Dan Titus (Salve Regina Computer Laboratories); and Dr. M. Therese Antone (President, Salve Regina University), who granted me a Presidential Scholarship and course reduction for Spring 2002 to complete the project. Thanks also to students in Salve Regina's CHP 251 (African-American Diaspora), for their contributions to the research, especially Michele Allaux, Mark Coleman, Kate Descoteaux, Alick Furtick, Richard Golden, and Meg Smith.
- <sup>2</sup> Newport Probate Evidence (NPE) 6:24, Will of George Johnson.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> This was likely John Stevens III (1753?-1817), a third-generation resident of Newport.
- <sup>5</sup> Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, "West Broadway Survey" (Providence 1977); Richard C. Youngken, "African Americans in Newport" (Providence 1994.)
- <sup>6</sup> Town Meeting Records, Copied (Newport Historical Society [NHS] Ms. 2007, pp.750-751.)
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 746.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 746; this was also known as the "Powder House Field." See the transaction from the Town of Newport to Isaac Senter (Newport Land Evidence [NLE] 5:125)
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 744.
- <sup>10</sup> These deeds are compiled in a special volume of land evidence at the Newport Historical Society under the name "School Lands."
- <sup>11</sup> Town Meeting Records, Copied, p. 746.
- <sup>12</sup> For eighteenth-century education in Newport, see Thomas B. Stockwell, A History of Public Education in Rhode Island from 1636 to 1876 (Providence: 1876); for the establishment of the first post-Revolutionary War public school, see James C. Garman and Myron Stachiw, "The Lot Much Too Small & the House Much Too Mean: The first Roman Catholic Church in Newport, Rhode Island," unpublished ms.
- <sup>13</sup> For example, Block 1 will encompass Lots 1 through 4 at the southwestern corner of the study area; Block 8 will encompass Lots 57 through 66 at the northeastern corner of the study area.
- <sup>14</sup> Data appearing in this table were extracted from systematic study of the School Lands land evidence volume, op. cit.
- <sup>15</sup> Town Meeting Records, p. 750.
- <sup>16</sup> The source for this table is a systematic review of the School Lands volume conducted by the author in August 2001 (see Appendix B.)
- <sup>17</sup> SLE: 154.
- <sup>18</sup> Charles Blaskowitz, A Plan of the Town of Newport in Rhode Island (Newport Historical Society.)
- <sup>19</sup> General Assembly Papers (Revolutionary War Claims for Damages, 1776-1781), Rhode Island State Archives, Providence. I am indebted to Myron Stachiw for pointing me to this most important source on Newport's architectural history.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 60.
- <sup>24</sup> For Lot 22. see NLE 5: 90; for Lot 24, see NLE 5: 93.
- <sup>25</sup> NPE 6: 99, Will of Jonathan Lake.
- <sup>26</sup> Important transactions include NLE 20:214, Charles P. Lake to Israel F. Lake and NLE 30:157, Israel F. Lake to Luke Waldron.
- <sup>27</sup> Federal Census of 1860, Newport, p. 221A.
- <sup>28</sup> NLE 54:37, Dorcas Waldron to James B. Cottrell.
- <sup>29</sup> See NLE 5:86 for the initial reference to this divestiture in the land evidence.

- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> See NLE 5: 86-93 inclusive; NLE 5: 100-101.
- <sup>32</sup> In *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society & The African Benevolent Society* (1976), William H. Robinson notes that an 1810 roll call indicates that one James Clarke was still listed as “taken by the British.”
- <sup>33</sup> These and the subsequent population data were extracted from Edwin Snow’s thorough Report upon the Census of Rhode Island (1877; Providence Press Company State Printers.)
- <sup>34</sup> NLE 14:235, Hannah and Ann Gardner to Cezar and Catharine Potter.
- <sup>35</sup> NLE 17:504, Cuff Simmons to R. and G. Shaw.
- <sup>36</sup> NLE 14:235, op. cit.
- <sup>37</sup> NLE 25:361, Abby Coleman to George B. Hazard
- <sup>38</sup> NLE 33:139, James Shilow to Hannah Robinson.
- <sup>39</sup> NLE 15:24, John and Sarah Chavers to John G. Moses.
- <sup>40</sup> *School-Lands Volume*, p. 116, Bartholomew Jackson to Elijah Knapp.
- <sup>41</sup> NLE 5:93, Town of Newport to Daniel Holloway, which mentions Brinley as an abutter.
- <sup>42</sup> NLE
- <sup>43</sup> For Matthew Rodman as abutter (1835), see NLE 20:215, Charles Lake to Israel F. Lake; for Nathaniel Rodman as abutter (1856). See NLE 33:352. Israel F. Lake to Thomas J. Lake. Both these transactions concern Lots 22 and 25 collectively.
- <sup>44</sup> Sources for these data are the Newport Land Evidence, the Federal Census of 1840 (p. 16) and a manuscript titled 6th Census for the Town of Newport, August 1840. The latter, an un-numbered ms. at the Newport Historical Society, is a listing of houses, owners, and tenants collected as part of the census. It provides fine-grained street data for Newport in 1840.
- <sup>45</sup> For example, see NLE 14:235, Hannah and Ann Gardner to Cezar and Catherine Potter.
- <sup>46</sup> NLE 17:504, Cuff Simmons to R. and G. Shaw.
- <sup>47</sup> NPR 13:127, Inventory of the Personal Estate of Cuff Simmons. The document dates the flat-roofed addition after 1842.
- <sup>48</sup> Robert Foley, Newport Restoration Foundation, personal communication 2002.
- <sup>49</sup> NLE 5:XX, Edmund Townsend, Treasurer of the Town of Newport to Daniel Holloway
- <sup>50</sup> NLE 12:302, Heirs of Daniel Holloway to Nicholas White
- <sup>51</sup> NLE 21:102, Nicholas White to Augustus Henry Robbins; NLE 22:230, A.H. Robbins to Tryphena Willson
- <sup>52</sup> See Kate Descoteaux, “55-57 Kingston Avenue”, unpublished ms. in the possession of the author.
- <sup>53</sup> Newport Probate Evidence 6:24, Will of George Johnson.
- <sup>54</sup> NLE 25:120, Benjamin Johnson to George and Eliza Johnson.
- <sup>55</sup> NLE 21:412, Power of Attorney from George and Eliza Johnson to Richard and George Shaw; NLE 21:447, Quitclaim from George and Eliza Johnson to Richard and George Shaw
- <sup>56</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, Newport, Rhode Island, p. 54.
- <sup>57</sup> *Directory of Newport, Rhode Island*, C.E.Hammet & Co., (Newport 1870)
- <sup>58</sup> NLE 25:120
- <sup>59</sup> NLE 22:293, William Borden to Daniel McAllister
- <sup>60</sup> Robert W. Hayman, *Catholicism in Rhode Island and the Diocese of Providence, 1780-1886* (Providence: 1982), p. 19.
- <sup>61</sup> See Garman and Stachiw, “The Lot Much Too Small...” for the history of this parish.
- <sup>62</sup> See Myra B. Young Armstead, “Lord, Please Don’t Take Me in August:” *African Americans in Newport and Saratoga Springs, 1870-1930* (Chicago 1997)
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 53.
- <sup>64</sup> Earlier African American churches occupied churches formerly used by white congregations or private homes.

- <sup>65</sup> NLE 29:112-113, George Hazard to William Wor, John Johnson, and James Shiloe, Trustees of the A.M.E. Church. Subsequent quotations are taken from this deed, which mistakenly identified the lot as Number 20.
- <sup>66</sup> Charles Battle, “Negroes on the Island of Rhode Island” (1930); Newport’s public schools were not integrated racially until 1866.
- <sup>67</sup> Youngken, *African Americans in Newport*, p. 66. The Mount Zion A.M.E. Church still exists and currently occupies a building on the corner of Van Zandt Avenue and Tilley Street.
- <sup>68</sup> NLE 53:127, Trustees of the Mount Zion A.M.E. Church to Margaret and Andrew McMahon.
- <sup>69</sup> See Michele Allaux “Mount Zion A.M.E. Church at 3 Johnson Court: A History”, unpublished ms. in the possession of the author.
- <sup>70</sup> NLE 35:396, Samuel Moses to Peter Wheelbanks.
- <sup>71</sup> NPE 41:192, Will of Sarah Wheelbanks
- <sup>72</sup> NLE 121:524, Samuel Brown to Maria McCastor and Julia L. Black
- <sup>73</sup> NLE 33:525, Samuel Moses to John H. Fisher.
- <sup>74</sup> NLE 35:396, Samuel Moses to Peter Wheelbanks.
- <sup>75</sup> 1860 Federal Census, Newport, p. 55
- <sup>76</sup> NLE 14:81, Clarke Rodman to John Williams.
- <sup>77</sup> NLE 11:510, Agreement between Jedediah Irish and John Williams
- <sup>78</sup> NLE 33:386, George B. Hazard to James Nichols
- <sup>79</sup> NLE 15:409, David Buffum to Edward Simmons.
- <sup>80</sup> NLE 15:410, Edward Simmons to John Barker.
- <sup>81</sup> NLE 40:471, City of Newport to Thomas Coggeshall
- <sup>82</sup> NLE 66:94, Constant Smith to Joseph T. Ray.
- <sup>83</sup> Obituary of Joseph T. Ray, *Newport Mercury*, May 7, 1943.
- <sup>84</sup> NLE 13:364, Hazard Bush to H.S. Simmons
- <sup>85</sup> NLE 21:349, Clarissa Melville to David M. Burdick
- <sup>86</sup> NLE 21:367, David M. Burdick to Albert Irish; NLE 21:398, Peleg Clarke to Albert Irish. The process of splitting and recombining lots is a frequent theme in the New Town land evidence of the nineteenth century.
- <sup>87</sup> NLE 37:210, Albert Irish to Nancy Eldredge.
- <sup>88</sup> NLE 99:320, Constant Smith to Anthony George (1914); NLE 108:19, Anthony George to Rosen and Segal (1919). For the Carter and Perry families, see the Newport City Directory of 1930.
- <sup>89</sup> NLE 26:32, Ann Greenman to James Brett.
- <sup>90</sup> NLE 29:15, James Brett to George B. Hazard
- <sup>91</sup> NPE 18:47-48, Will of James Brett
- <sup>92</sup> Newport Mortgage Book 4:172-173, William O’Reilly to Michael Maguire.
- <sup>93</sup> NLE
- <sup>94</sup> NLE
- <sup>95</sup> NLE 80:535, Margaret Kelly to George and Lavinia Butler.
- <sup>96</sup> NLE 45:321, Patrick Reynolds to Michael Harris.
- <sup>97</sup> NLE Heirs of Michael Harris to Elix Adelson
- <sup>98</sup> For a thorough and meticulous review of this property, see Melissa Grant “The Riggs and Booth Tenement,” unpublished ms. in the possession of the author.



Salve Regina University  
100 Ochre Point Avenue  
Newport, Rhode Island 02840  
[www.salve.edu](http://www.salve.edu)