Norman Morrison Isham: Newport Restoration Foreshadows Modern Preservation

Alyssa Lozupone
Salve Regina University, alyssa.lozupone@salve.edu

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NORMAN MORRISON ISHAM:
NEWPORT RESTORATION FORESHADOWS MODERN PRESERVATION

 Alyssa Lozupone

Senior Thesis in Cultural and Historic Preservation

Salve Regina University

December 2010
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Introduction

Isham in Newport

Norman Morrison Isham was an architect, a teacher, an author, and a preservationist. He was considered an authority on Newport’s Colonial architecture, and thus was employed by various organizations and individuals to guide local restoration projects. These projects, ranging in date from 1914 to 1931, included the Redwood Library, the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House, The Colony House, and the Brick Market. Isham’s work at these sites is representative of an early period of the history of preservation in the United States, and as such, Isham worked prior to the foundation of modern day historic preservation standards and guidelines. An analysis of Isham’s restoration work in Newport provides insight into the elements that compose his preservation theory and how his theory, as carried out at Colonial era structures in Newport, foreshadows present-day preservation techniques.

History of Isham

Norman Morrison Isham was born in Hartford, Connecticut, in November 1864 and passed away at his Wickford home in January 1943 at the age of seventy eight. He attended Brown University as part of the graduating class of 1886, and after graduation, became a partner in an architectural firm. In 1892, Isham began working for himself and remained in this practice for the rest of his career. In addition to being an architect, Isham was a professor of architecture both at Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design, as well as a prolific author. He

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2 (1943), Possibly an obituary, Newport Historical Society, Newport; Providence Journal, "Nationally Known Authority on Early American Architecture Died Yesterday at His Home in Wickford. He Was 78 Years Old," January 2, 1943.

3 Name of the architectural firm that Isham joined upon graduating is unknown.
wrote numerous books which addressed the early architecture of Rhode Island and Connecticut, as well as the Colonial architectural style overall.

Throughout his career, Isham was a successful blend of scholar, architect, antiquarian and archeologist.\(^4\) Antiquarians traditionally did not preserve old buildings directly, but rather preserved history through the collection of antiques. In the same way, architects alone did not lead in the preservation of buildings, but rather “performed a valuable service for preservationism by popularizing older styles through books and articles”, and, in the case of Isham, documenting historic buildings through measured drawings and condition reports.\(^5\) In this way, Isham’s success as a preservationist came from both his interest in the past as an antiquarian and his skills as a trained architect. This success was furthered by his role as a scholar and amateur archeologist. These skills provided him with the ability to both contribute a refined understanding of the history of colonial architecture and its forms, and investigate the structure of historic buildings to inform restoration decisions.

**Isham in Context**

Isham’s colleagues within the preservation community during the early twentieth century were individuals such as William Sumner Appleton, Wallace Nutting, and restoration architects such as Frederick J. Kelly and Joseph Chandler.\(^6\) During Isham’s time in Newport, he worked most closely with Appleton, the founder of the Society for the Preservation of New England


Antiquities, and the “first professional preservationist”.\textsuperscript{7} Isham, along with Chandler and Kelly, were appointed by the Board of Trustees of SPNEA as consulting architects for the Society.\textsuperscript{8} This connection with SPNEA, and its founder, proved to be a catalyst for Isham’s involvement with the preservation of colonial sites in Newport.

The context in which SPNEA was formed, and the legacy it created as the “first corporation in the business of preservation”, provides insight into the preservation and national framework in which Isham worked.\textsuperscript{9} SPNEA’s formulation as an organization, and its founding mission, reflected “the era’s dominant currents of progressivism, the Colonial Revival, and professionalism”. Progressivism was marked by the founding of voluntary organizations such as SPNEA “to study society’s problems, popularize their agenda, and shape culture”. These organizations were “modeled along corporate lines, scientific method, and focused on the particular task of a newly emerging profession”. Their work focused on economic development, a regeneration of older values for the new age, and on creating “heartfelt yearnings for the past’s imagined order”. Through his efforts to record and preserve Colonial architecture, Isham becomes a product of Progressivism, promoting the reuse of, through scientific restoration, historic structures for his contemporary society.


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
Coexisting with progressivism was the Colonial Revival. At the core of this movement was a “longing for stability and roots”. The origins of the Colonial Revival came from “an attempt to harness industrialism through traditionalism”. Early historic preservation was an active part of the Colonial Revival movement. In fact “it went to the heart of the most contentious issue in the early twentieth century: whose culture would prevail as the nation went through the throes of immigration, industrialization, and modernization”. Isham was a product of the Colonial Revival in that he was a traditionalist, sharing many of the same ideologies from which Appleton created SPNEA. Both men most closely identified with the preindustrial, medieval world. Isham valued “the earliest buildings of New England as expressions of the medieval world”, searching for the “first uniquely American features” of architecture. He praised seventeenth-century artisans who preserved the “traditions of their trades”. Isham was not only a product of the Colonial Revival as a traditionalist, but he was also an active participant of the movement. As an architect, he designed “notable colonial revival buildings”, and was the


author of essays, such as those published in *The White Pine Series*, which promoted Colonial Revival reproductions.¹⁶

**Historiography and Purpose**

There has been little in-depth research published that comprehensively looks at Isham biographically or in regards to his preservation projects or restoration approach. Antoinette F. Downing and Vincent J. Scully mention Isham minimally in their book *The Architectural Heritage of Newport Rhode Island, 1640 to 1915*. They discuss a number of structures that he researched, documented, or restored, but do not address these projects in depth. The purpose of their book is to discuss the historic architecture of Newport, not the history of Newport’s preservation efforts. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., also discusses Isham’s career briefly in *Presence of the Past*, published in 1965. In this book, Isham is just a small aspect in a larger discussion of the history of preservation. Isham is discussed in terms of his role as an antiquarian, and his relationship with his contemporaries, Appleton and Nutting. A more recent dialogue of Isham and his role in preservation is James M. Lindgren’s book *Preserving Historic New England: Preservation, Progressivism, and the Remaking of Memory*. Lindgren’s approach differs from Downing and Scully’s in that he writes about Isham’s work with The Society for New England Antiquities, and its founder Appleton. While Lindgren’s book does not address specific preservation projects Isham was involved with, it provides context for Isham’s work by discussing the SPNEA’s historical framework. Additionally, as an author, Isham wrote extensively, including *Early American Houses: A Glossary of Colonial Architectural Terms*, *Trinity Church in Newport*, *Early Rhode Island Houses*, and many others. While providing

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insight into Isham as a scholar and architect, these books do not document his restoration work or preservation theory.

This lack of literature on Isham, and his role as a preservationist provides significant cause for the study of his restoration projects in Newport. An understanding of the preservation efforts Isham guided in Newport is valuable in that it contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of his role as a restoration architect and the preservation theory and techniques he practiced. This investigation of Isham’s work in Newport proves to be significant not solely for a better understanding of the man himself but also in providing for a more complete history of preservation in Newport. Insight into the different parties involved, and the politics surrounding, restoration work in the early twentieth-century, is gained. This addition to Newport’s preservation history will contribute to an increased understanding of the city’s built environment, further enhancing the interpretation of these sites. In shedding light on new information, this thesis will put an end to the stereotypes surrounding Isham’s work, and serve as a stepping stone for understanding the architect.

**Isham Works as an Architect**

Isham’s earliest project in Newport was at the Redwood Library in 1915. His exact role at the site is unclear. National Register Nomination Records for the site, published in 1967, stated that his involvement consisted of a restoration of both the exterior and interior of the Library. A Supplementary Sheet of the Survey stated more specifically that “The original front central part of the structure was restored in 1915 by Norman M. Isham to Peter Harrison’s original design”.\(^{17}\) Isham’s involvement at the site is more generally described in the 1970 Historic American

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Building Survey report, however. This report stated simply that “Norman Isham worked on the interior restoration from 1912 – 1931”. While these sources emphasize Isham’s role as guiding the restoration, a closer study of the site demonstrates that the major work carried out at the Redwood in 1915 is an example of Isham working solely as an architect.

Isham first became involved at the Redwood in 1914. Along with John duFais, as consulting architect, Isham created a condition report in response to a request made by Dr. Roderick Terry, then president of the Library. The report was made to assess the “present condition and the future development” of the Library. In the report, Isham divided the building into four different parts; “the old part on Bellevue Avenue built by Peter Harrison in 1747-1750”, an addition by George Snell completed in 1858 located on the east end of Harrison’s block, a third addition completed by George C. Mason in 1875, and the last, the present [in 1914] stack building. Isham’s division of the site in this way demonstrates his research and knowledge of the structural history of the site, and his acknowledgment of the different additions as representative of distinct eras in the Library’s history.

In this report Isham described the present condition both of the exterior and the interior of the building, organizing by the four blocks he had previously outlined. His assessment of the structure focused on the condition of general architectural features as well as building systems; heating, electricity, and plumbing. Within this report, he also carefully considered issues of accessibility and functionality. Throughout his assessment, Isham made note of where the


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
original structure and original materials were located in each section of the building. This attention to historic detail implies a treatment of the structure that is sensitive to its historic fabric.\textsuperscript{20}

Also included in Isham’s report were recommendations for the Library’s future development. Immediate recommendations for the Library only included alterations to the Mason Block. He proposed first that the “great room in this part of the building” be made a reference and delivery room.\textsuperscript{21} He then gave suggestions as to how and where different types of collections should be housed. For example he stated; “The genealogical collections, and others which need to be grouped where the shelves are accessible are to be put in the alcoves formed at the corners of this room, while rare books, manuscripts and so on, may be exhibited in the cases standing on the floor”. Isham further suggested where certain pictures should be placed for their most successful display, he wrote; “The more important pictures are to be arranged on the walls just above the top of the reference book cases, and thus low enough to be seen to some advantage by the visitor, and to display themselves while they decorate the room instead of making it top heavy”.

Concerning the development of the Library in the more distant future, Isham recommended where the stacks should be placed, stating that they should be moved from their present location to the rear of the new Delivery Room. He argued that this will make the new

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\textsuperscript{20} “Report upon the Present Condition and the Future Development of the Redwood Library at Newport, RI,” Norman Morrison Isham and John DuFais to Roderick Terry, March 31, 1914, Redwood Library, Newport, RI, pg. 5.
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\textsuperscript{21} “Report upon the Present Condition and the Future Development of the Redwood Library at Newport, RI,” Norman Morrison Isham and John DuFais to Roderick Terry, March 31, 1914, Redwood Library, Newport, RI, pg. 5.
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Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
stack available “not only from the Delivery Room, but also from the rooms at the east and west of this”.\(^{22}\) He noted that with this move, the present stack should then be made a periodical room, to the east of which he suggested should be the creation of two rooms for the younger visitors and “the exhibition of sculpture, photographs, curious and so forth”. Isham also provided ideas as to where to place the cataloguing space, enhancing convenience by means of stairs and a passage, as well as through the creation of an auditorium “for lectures and exhibitions”. Both his recommendations for alterations in both the immediate and distant future demonstrate Isham’s concern with the functionality of library space, and its accessibility for the visitor.

As part of his future recommendations, Isham also proposed that the old Library rooms should be made into reading rooms and study rooms, and that “the present door on Bellevue Avenue” should be disused so that “absolute quiet can be had”.\(^{23}\) Isham made note that “In making these changes, in these older rooms” that the galleries, then present in the Harrison and Snell Blocks, should be removed, and that the restoration of the Harrison room should be performed “as near as possible to its original condition”. Here, Isham is acknowledging the Harrison and Snell blocks as the “older rooms”, and thus created distinctly separate plans for these spaces than those made for the Mason block. This differentiation demonstrates Isham’s recognition of historic fabric and original design as distinct from the rest of the structure, an


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.


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approach that was also seen in his assessment of the condition of the Library. Isham strongly urged overall, that all the additions and alterations he proposed for the Library “be carried out in the strictest accord with the architectural lines given by Peter Harrison, the original architect”. In this way, Isham distinguishes restoration as a separate project, yet still emphasizes that general architectural work should be conscientious of the historic nature of the building.

Three months after completing this report, Isham issued another entitled “Cabinet-work and Painting Specifications for Redwood Library Newport, Rhode Island”. Architecture drawings created by Isham from this year depict plans for the Mason Block. Thus, this document appears to make his earlier recommendations into a contract by stating the jobs and responsibilities of the contractor. The report was divided into masonry work, plastering, door frames, etc., and stated specifically what jobs Isham dictated the contractor and workers should perform at the Library. Another document written in June of 1914, entitled Redwood Library by “NM Isham”, appears to be a close replica of that contract, much of what is written there was duplicated. This second document differs in that it included Isham’s specifications for building systems, as well as additional instructions for carpentry work to be done. These two sources confirm that the recommendations made by Isham in his first report on the Redwood Library were, in fact, carried out, with the focus of his plans continuing to be on functionality of the space and accessibility to the Library’s visitors.

24 Norman Morrison Isham, Cabinet-Work and Painting Specifications for Redwood Library Newport, Rhode Island, June 1914, Redwood Library, Newport.


26 Norman Morrison Isham, Cabinet-Work and Painting Specifications for Redwood Library Newport, Rhode Island, June 1914, Redwood Library, Newport.

27 Norman Morrison Isham, Redwood Library, June 10, 1914, Redwood Library, Newport.
The Annual Report of the Directors of the Redwood Library commented on this remodeling of the site which was completed in 1915. The report stated that:

The past year will be a memorable one in the long and interesting history of the Library. It marks a new epoch that argues well for its future. The new building, erected through the munificence of the late Mrs. Gardner Blanchard Perry, is now complete and in order…The new entrance on Redwood Street through a much needed vestibule is a great improvement. The stacks have been removed from the old stack room, and this room so arranged and decorated that its beautiful proportions may be appreciated. It was found the Library possessed many interesting and valuable portraits and pictures that heretofore had been put away, or hidden behind stacks, etc.; and these were now renovated and restored, the frames renewed or repaired, and were hung artistically and prominently about the walls…Heretofore there had been no room, or means, to exhibit properly the many valuable, and rare manuscripts, books and other articles. Many of these now repose in well arranged cases, that add greatly to the attractiveness of the Library; but some still remain to be arranged for, and it is proposed to place these in the front building, when means shall be found to alter and improve that oldest part of the Library.\(^{28}\)

The projects that are noted mimic those which Isham discussed both in his future recommendations and specifications. This further confirms that Isham’s work was carried out at the site.

It becomes clear that the work carried out at the Redwood in 1915 is representative of Isham working as an architect. His assessment and recommendations for the site focus on alterations to the Mason Block, a 1875 addition to the Library. This most recent block would not have been considered a historic feature in 1915 when this work was done, and thus, contrary to the claims made by the National Register Nomination for the site, Isham’s plans for the Redwood are not representative of restoration work.

Although the project is not an example of Isham guiding restoration, his work at the Library still provides insight into his preservation theory. Isham’s role as an architect at the Redwood, and the projects he carried out, foreshadows his work as a restoration architect at other sites in Newport. Throughout both Isham’s condition report and specifications for the

remodeling of the Library, he was considerate of the historic fabric and original design of the building. He consistently made note as to where historic additions were located in his plan and provided stipulations for how these original elements of the Library should be treated. There was a distinct difference between the recommended treatment of these historic elements, and the treatment of more recent additions to the structure. In this way, it becomes clear through Isham’s management of the site, that he made a distinction between architectural and restoration projects.

Yet, while Isham separated his work as an architect and his work as a preservationist, the influence of his knowledge in both professions is evident. Isham’s attention to historic details while working as an architect at the Redwood resulted in a treatment of the structure that was sensitive to its original design. This conscientiousness proves to be a precursor to his subsequent projects in Newport as a restoration architect. Additionally, Isham’s work at the Redwood overall was intended to make the Library more functional and accessible for its owners and its patrons. His focus on room arrangement and room use, and building systems pinpoint his goal in making the structure more utilitarian. This concentration on the functionality of space is a key aspect of Isham’s approach towards restoration, thus demonstrating that despite the differentiation in architectural and restoration projects, there was a fluidity in his approach and in the influence of his architectural training on his restoration work.

**Isham Works as a Preservationist**

Isham’s role as an active preservationist in Newport began in the years following the Redwood Library architectural work. During this time, he wrote condition reports and performed architectural investigations for numerous structures. It wasn’t until a little over ten years later, with his work at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House in 1927, that Isham first became involved as a restoration architect. At this time, Isham simultaneously got involved at the Colony House, and
a few years later, at the Brick Market. With these projects, Isham’s role transitioned from architect to, more specifically, restoration architect, who was employed by the community’s historical groups and entrepreneurs as an authority on matters concerning architecture and the Colonial era.29

The brief time period in which these restorations occurred implies an overall movement in Newport to preserve its Colonial architecture. These buildings were referred to as sites of pilgrimage in need of restoration, the goal being to return them to their “full beauty and dignity” so as to be enjoyed by the public.30 The preservation of these structures became a matter of patriotism and the citizens of Newport actively became involved by contributing financially to the projects. This perspective came to define the early preservation movement in Newport, making Newport’s restoration work a product of the Colonial Revival.

A window into Isham’s preservation theory as it applies to Newport can be gleaned from a public lecture given by Isham in 1926. A Newport Herald newspaper article entitled “Mr. Isham Gives a Fine Discourse” was published on November 27th of that year and reports on this speech.31 The article focuses on three main aspects of Isham’s restoration work, the date of restoration, modern improvements, and interpretation.

During this public lecture, Isham is reported to have first commented on how to address the overall structure and layout of historic building. The article reads:

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29 Possibly Maud Lyman Stevens Unknown Author, Typescript discussing the garden at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 1.

30 Wanton Lyman Hazard House. Pamphlet distributed by the Committee on Restoration, Newport Historical Society, Newport.

Mr. Isham’s advice is broadly, leave old buildings as they are. You may restore them to good condition, but do not rip them to pieces to bring them back to coincide with your idea of the date decided upon as the birth of the building. This remark applies to floors, as well as structure.32

As the article is only a report of what Isham said during his public lecture, and not an actual account of his speech, there are multiple ways in which the article can be interpreted. Isham reportedly held the opinion that it was appropriate to preserve pieces of a structure even if they were not part of the original design. Thus, for example, if there is an addition on the house which tells a portion of the building’s story, then Isham would propose that it should remain as part of the structure.

A second interpretation can be gleaned from this article, however. Isham may not have meant that a historic structure should not be altered, as that is the nature of restoration, but rather that in restoring, a structure should not be altered in a way that necessitates reconstruction of historic elements. His argument may have been that one should not take a historic building and remove pieces of its structure in order to return it to a chosen date if, in doing this, historic fabric is discarded and new material is needed to return the structure to the appearance of its original condition. With either interpretation, an emphasis on original fabric and authenticity is a consistent aspect of Isham’s preservation theory.

This 1926 Newport Herald article also commented on Isham’s opinion of adding modern improvements to a historic structure, thus providing further insight into the architect’s preservation philosophy at the time. The article stated:

In any plan for adding modern improvements remember you are introducing features that did not exist in ancient houses. The plan to introduce heating from an outside source is

advisable. Similarly with plumbing and electric lighting, do not overdo these things. Do not cut the edifice to pieces for these purposes.  

This statement supports the second interpretation of Isham’s discourse, that during the restoration process the historic structure should be restored and outfitted with modern improvements, but only if it does not interfere with historic fabric. The installation of modern building systems would prove to be a significant aspect of Isham’s restoration projects, demonstrating his value in the functionality of space.

The third issue that the 1926 article touched on was the matter of fitting historic houses with appropriate furniture. Isham advised the Society to be very careful in how they furnish a house, and very critical of the gifts that they receive. He is credited as saying; “You will be offered presents of all sorts and conditions and all periods of furniture. Much is bound to be unsuitable and he advised the committee to be guarded in accepting junk”. Isham emphasized the importance of filling the house with furniture of an appropriate date. He also stated that “Some rooms have been restored in old houses by labeling the room with the date of the year of its supposed restoration. But, be sure to settle the date of your furnishing”. This discussion of decorating the interior of the site with appropriate artifacts implies that Isham’s preservation theory included not only techniques for architectural restoration, but also practices for historical interpretation. It also further reveals Isham’s emphasis on authenticity during the restoration process.


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
While this article cannot be used as the sole source for understanding Isham’s preservation theory, it does provide insight into Isham’s restoration strategy during the years of his major projects in Newport. His work at the three sites, the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, the Colony House, and the Brick Market, can be compared to this article to understand where his advice matches, or does not match his practice, and where he differs in his reported philosophies.

**Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House Restoration Work, 1926**

The first house guided by Isham between the years 1926 and 1930, was the Wanton Lyman Hazard House. The restoration of this domestic site was the beginning of this larger movement of preservation in Newport. Isham’s work at the site is considered to take “first place as the start of Colonial Restoration in Newport”.35

Isham became involved at the Hazard House in 1915, although physical work at the site would not begin for another ten years. At this time, the heirs of the house were searching for a historical institution that would be interested in purchasing and preserving the building. Maud Lyman Stevens, one of the heirs of the home, was active in arguing for the preservation of the site. She wrote:

> Old Newport is becoming rapidly new Newport, as one by one, the early houses succumb to the inevitable changes that passing time must bring. It seems of real importance that one old house should remain, unaltered and unspoiled, a lasting memorial of the days and the ways of our forefathers.36

Advocating for the preservation of the structure, the family was first in contact with William Sumner Appleton. Isham was prompted by his colleague’s involvement, and became actively

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36 Maud Lyman Stevens, "The Old House at 17 Broadway," *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society*, no. 59 (October 1926), pg. 17.
involved by corresponding with Appleton, interested historic societies, such as the Society of Cincinnati, and with the family heirs directly.  

By 1920, the heirs had engaged the Newport Historical Society in discussions regarding the purchase and preservation of the Hazard House. On March 22, 1920, Appleton wrote a letter to Dr. Roderick Terry, then president of the historical society, to argue for the preservation of the house, and also to emphasize Isham’s support for the project. He wrote:

The value of such a house to Newport arises from three facts. In the first place it is a house of an extremely early period; so far as I know there is no other house of the early period remaining in Newport that compares with this for an instant…the use to which such a house should be put is a highly educational one, since it would give your Historical Society a valuable opportunity to display there in appropriate surroundings and with the proper background, such of the furniture of the older period as you may possess and as may come to you in the future…If I had any doubt in the matter it would vanish in view of the fact that Mr. Isham feels as I do about it…

Here, Appleton deferred to Isham’s opinion to strengthen his argument for preservation, demonstrating his respect for the architect’s authority.

The house officially came under the ownership of the Newport Historical Society in 1926. Terry requested that a committee be made to “work for the purchasing and preservation of the Hazard House”, with Isham acting as a member. This “Committee on Restoration” began by asking for donations from the community to fund the restoration. A publication, of unknown date, was distributed by the Committee to state the Newport Historical Society’s own reasons for the preservation of the home. It also asked for the readers within the Newport community to make contributions to the cause. In the article, the committee stated:

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37 Wanton Lyman Hazard House Manuscript Collection, Newport Historical Society, Newport.

38 William Sumner Appleton to Roderick Terry, March 22, 1920, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 5.

A notable example of the substantial homes of our forefathers, pronounced by experts to be one of the most interesting in New England, is the old Wanton-Lyman-Hazard House now standing on Broadway, formerly Broad Street, or Newport Path of the early days. The old house is conspicuous and readily noted by its picturesque roof line, and its appearance of great antiquity. To fully restore this ancient dwelling to its early state, furnish it in keeping with its period and make it an object of pilgrimage for our visitors is a task worthy of the necessary effort, and a challenge to every citizen who thoughtfully considers the future welfare of our wonderful city...This appeal is to every citizen, individually, to make some contribution to this fund so that the Wanton-Lyman Hazard House may really be owned by the people of the community, and used as a Mecca for our visitors and friends who want to know the Newport of two hundred and twenty-five years ago as well as the Newport Today.40

The patriotic motivation for the restoration becomes clear with the Committee’s call for the community’s involvement. This argument demonstrates the preservation environment in which Isham worked, and which his projects fostered. The Committee successfully raised $6,000 and the Society “resolved to buy the property and take title in the name of the Newport Historical Society”. At this time, Isham, along with Mr. John duFais, were appointed “professional advisers” for the project.41

Prior to the start of the restoration project, it was recorded that the more recent additions to the structure were in most severe disrepair: “The New Part, as it was still called almost 150 years after being built, was badly decayed from poor drainage of water off the low-pitched roof”, and the addition built by John Wanton was in a similar condition.42 More specifically, beams had fallen in in places, plaster was falling down, and the floors were rotted out. Similarly, the kitchen ell was also decayed from water damage. “The floor boards on both stories were rotted, and the

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40 Wanton Lyman Hazard House. Pamphlet distributed by the Committee on Restoration, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 1.


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
frame showed signs of weakening”. The original portion of the house had less water damage, “limited to the sills and wood close to the ground”, but other nonrelated damage was documented:

Water was also leaking in around the chimney, causing plaster to fall. In the parlor, a hole in the ceiling showed the floor joists, which were originally exposed before being plastered over. The floor joists in the keeping room were fully exposed and plastered between.

The deteriorated state of the site, in combination with its patriotic cause, explains the need for immediate restoration in order for the home to be saved for future use.

Restoration work on the Wanton-Lyman Hazard House officially began in 1927, under the guidance of Isham as “supervising architect” and with the funding raised by the Newport Historical Society. Initial decisions regarding immediate changes and overall framework of the restoration project were decided upon in a meeting of the Newport Historical Society in November, 1927. The result of the meeting was the decision to retain the original building and its first addition, which was added before the Revolution and therefore had “Revolutionary interest”. In addition, meeting attendees decided to discard the lean-to addition at the rear of the house, put on in 1783. A newspaper article from the Newport Herald provided the reasoning for these decisions:

It was decided first to discard the lean to as it was almost beyond repair though Miss Stevens desired to retain even this. It had, though, been built only after the Revolution and did not have any real historic significance. The previous addition had Revolutionary connections and interest and besides it would serve for purposes of a kitchen in the

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restored outfit…Moreover the Hazard family, who had given much toward the purchase of the building desired that this be retained…  
In contrast to the opinions of the Committee at large, Isham opposed these decisions. He felt that the lean-to addition was not part of the original building construction and that “if there were to be a restoration it should be restored down to its very beginning”. Instead, Isham favored “retaining only the original structure which is oblong and has only two rooms downstairs”. Isham’s desire to restore to the structure’s original appearance and design speaks to his emphasis on authenticity and his appreciation for the architect’s original intent.

Isham’s opinion as “supervising architect” was unfortunately disregarded in favor of the wishes of the Hazard family, who wanted the addition to be retained. This dialogue amongst the committee, the family heirs, and Isham regarding to what physical state the structure should be restored provides insight into the different individuals who played a role in the restoration project, and the political environment it created. The project was not solely the work of Isham, but rather the work of Isham as he responded to the opinions of the multiple parties involved.

The ultimate decision to remove the 1783 addition during the restoration process revealed “the old shingles on the roof of the original house and the old clapboards on the kitchen addition”. This original material was found to be “Very much decayed – even the corner posts


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
were nothing but dry powder”. In exposing the old clapboards, the original construction was revealed and it was discovered that perpendicular boarding had been used, “except where repairs had been made”. With further investigation, multiple layers of clapboards were found on the structure, providing insight into the original appearance of the house. The outermost layer of clapboards found on the original portion of the building were painted Indian red, but further analysis showed that this paint color was applied years after the boards were first installed. Apparently, the clapboards “were very much worn down and weather-beaten before they were painted”. A second layer of clapboards were found, these reported to “undoubtedly be the original clapboards of the house, dating back to 1680 or more”. These earlier clapboards showed no evidence of ever being painted. This detailed analysis of the structure and its materials demonstrates Isham’s scientific approach to restoration and his skills as an amateur building archeologist.

Isham’s investigation of original material during the restoration process lead to an understanding of the original construction techniques, and in turn facilitated an accurate reconstruction of the boarding that was too decayed to repair. Prior to the completion of this portion of the project however, T.T. Pitman wrote to Isham concerned with the monetary costs of installing the boards perpendicularly. The letter read:

Upon a recent visit to the Wanton-Lyman-Hazard house a workman called my attention to a kind of work that to my mind seemed unnecessarily expensive as it was on the ell of the house, would be covered and on completion of the work would be completely out of sight. I refer to the boarding that would be covered by clapboards eventually. It appeared that the plan was to make this boarding in the style that was used originally for the whole structure in common with other building of a hundred or more years ago. The men were ready to proceed, and I took the responsibility to order the boards to be put on horizontally instead of vertically. I cannot see that it can make the least difference when the work is done…

Despite this opposition, Isham did not wave in his opinion, and new perpendicular boarding was put up on the North end of the house and on the kitchen addition, and new clapboards were installed on three sides of the house, and the kitchen addition. This use of accurate historical construction demonstrates again Isham’s dedication to authenticity and original form. In this instance, Isham’s opinion was held superior, despite the differing views of other members in the committee.

As the restoration process progressed, it continued to shed light on the structure’s original form and in turn on Isham’s skill in architectural investigation in guiding his work. For example, during the process of re-shingling the roof, it was discovered that the kitchen addition was originally only “a story and a half high”. With this new information, Isham decided that this portion of the building should be cut down to its original size, which in the end, it was.

Other restoration work at the Hazard House during 1927 included “removing the earth from the sides of the house so that sills that had rotted away could be removed”. In addition, the foundation all around the house was repaired, and in places it was “practically rebuilt” due to the collapse of the original foundation during the repairs. New sills, a new summer, and a new cellar entrance were also installed at the house. Concerning the upper portion of the structure,

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Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.


flashings were put around the chimneys and a new trap door was built for the roof. Gutters were also installed and leaders connected, as there was a concern that “heavy rain water is apt to drive in and the cellar is in danger of being flooded”. Repairing and painting was also carried out, including “a primary coat of white paint”, on the Broadway side of the house. On the interior, “new floor joists and a new rough flooring” were installed in the upstairs and downstairs of the kitchen, as well as in the “south room”. Additionally, new window frames were put in the North and East ends of the house, as well as in the kitchen. As demonstrated through the previous examples of the clapboards and height adjustment of the kitchen addition, Isham would not have performed work on these features, whether it was repair of old or installation of new, without prior investigation of their original form.

This first phase of restoration work, in 1927, was halted a year later due to a lack of funds. The restoration project resumed in the fall of 1929, the focus changing to the interior of the structure. Work began by removing modern partitions and as it progressed, old features of construction and of decoration were revealed, and these the committee had to consider one by one as they appeared; judge of their age, their original purpose when possible, the advisability of restoring where some parts were damaged or missing: that is, when to restore, when to replace with part productions, when to take out and replace with new, etc.


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
It must be remembered here that as the head of the committee making these decisions, Isham functioned as “supervising architect”. The clear and organized approach to the decision making process demonstrates Isham’s diligence as a restoration architect.

In the same way that architectural investigation helped to inform decisions regarding the restoration of the exterior boarding and clapboards, paint color for the interiors was decided by “removing the various layers of paint on walls and woodwork” and uncovering the earliest coats of paint. During this process, black and red paint was found around the room as baseboard trim, and these colors were “restored as found”. This use of investigation to guide restoration decisions, in all aspects of the project, demonstrates again the scientific nature of Isham’s work.

Also during this 1929 phase of restoration, the ceilings in the building were re-lathed, re-plastered, and whitened, “as the old laths had gone past their usefulness and further patching of plaster would be a waste of effort”. Whitewash that had been applied to “the wooden framing and the summer beams” was removed, and the pieces were then oiled. It was further reported that “windows with small panes have been put back, restoring the appearance of earlier days”, and that shutters were repaired or restored as well.

In addition to both exterior and interior work, the restoration project at the Hazard House included designs for the grounds of the house. Guiding these garden designs was Isham. It was reported that:

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Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
The Newport Garden Association graded the grounds last fall ready for planting this spring. The grade necessitated a stone retaining wall, which was built during the fall and early spring. Mrs. Webster and Mrs. Norman adopted the garden plans of Mr. Isham, and shrubs, vines and plants suitable for the historic setting of the house have been planted. Already the new grass is green and the shrubs are making themselves at home, and putting out new leaves.62

It was argued by individuals such as Maud Lyman Stevens that the work performed to create the garden space was done to further protect and preserve the site. It is unknown whether the design of the garden was historically accurate, but a point was made that the composition of the garden included a variety of plants which were “of suitable antiquity”.63 The space also included a “summer house and arbor”, used “as the axis of the design” and as a space for “shelter when tea is taken in the garden”.64 Drawings of a “garden house”, created by Isham in 1930, can be found at the Newport Historical Society, and it is possible that these depict the “summer house”.65 Isham’s involvement with designs for the garden represents the fact that his role went beyond solely the physical restoration of the structure, but rather included the site overall.

The bulk of the restoration work on the Hazard House was completed by July, 5, 1929.66 The work still to be accomplished was reported in the Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society in 1929. The article stated that:


63 Possibly Maud Lyman Stevens Unknown Author, Typescipt discussing the garden at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 1.

64 Possibly Maud Lyman Stevens Unknown Author, Typescipt discussing the garden at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 1.

65 Wanton Lyman Hazard House Manuscript Collection, Newport Historical Society, Newport.

There yet remains to be finished the laying out of the lower yard around the kitchen door, the laying of flags which will hold the tables and chairs to be used when outdoor afternoon tea is served; the painting or oiling of the floors; the placing of simple window hangings; the acquiring of pieces of furniture as loans, until gifts can be secured.\textsuperscript{67}

What remained were interior decorations, including window hangings and furniture, as well as exterior decoration, including the preparation of the outdoor grounds for the serving of tea. It was “open for inspection on August 30”, and “in the summer of 1930, after being furnished, the house was opened full time to the public”.\textsuperscript{68}

Isham’s role at the Hazard House was to work to restore a site viewed as valuable for its embodiment of early American traditions. Preservationists, the home’s heirs, and the community as a whole, recognized the significance of preserving the site for this reason, in addition to the educational resources it could provide. The patriotic focus of the restoration, a trademark of the Colonial Revival, characterized the preservation movement in Newport. This environment exemplifies that in which Isham shifted from work as an architect, at the Redwood in 1915, to restoration architect. The multiple parties invested in the project reflects the political environment that surrounded Isham’s restoration decisions throughout the process and that the product of the restoration is not representative of Isham’s work in isolation. His work at the Hazard House overall demonstrates that his preservation theory focused on structural investigation to inform decisions, a value for original material and authenticity, and a diligence which lends itself to restoration that is scientific in nature.


Wanton Lyman Hazard House Work through a Modern Lens

Isham’s restoration work at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House provides important insight into the architect’s preservation theory and how his approach is consistent with today’s most recent standards and guidelines for restoration. The most significant insight gained into Isham’s preservation theory and approach stems from his decision to do away with both additions to the house and restore the structure to its original layout. According to the 1926 Newport Herald article, Isham believed that historic structures should not undergo extensive alterations in order to be returned to a decided restoration date. Yet this is exactly what Isham proposed to do at the Hazard House site just a year later in 1927. The caveat to what appears to be a contradiction between Isham’s theory and his practice is that in removing an addition in order to return the Hazard House to its original appearance, no new material would need to be substituted in order to restore the structure to this desired time period. In this way, Isham demonstrated that his preservation theory was not opposed to the removal of historic fabric to reach a specific restoration date, but was rather opposed to adding modern materials to create a false appearance of history. In fact, Isham’s decisions at the Hazard house reveal his dedication to a structure’s original form and intent.

Isham’s decision regarding the structural alterations of the building also represents how his preservation theory is consistent with today’s modern SOI standards. The Secretary of the Interior recommends that the restoration of a site should be completed to “depict the building as it appeared at the most significant time in its history.” Isham consistently viewed the most

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significant time in history to be the building’s original design and appearance. According to today’s standards, any feature or material that correlates with a time period other than that chosen for the restoration should be removed. Isham recommended this course of action, but was overruled by the committee. Ultimately, the addition put on before the Revolution remained on the house.

Isham’s practice also meets the most recent standards and guidelines for restoration through his architectural investigation and careful analysis of historic materials. Isham based his decisions during the restoration process on this on-site research, seeking to restore the structure to its original appearance through authentic means of construction. This technique can be seen on both the exterior and interior of the Hazard house. When exterior work began removing additions from the Hazard House, original fabric was discovered. Multiple layers of clapboards were found and analyzed to determine the original color and construction. Isham repaired and restored the clapboards on the house with careful consideration of their original appearance. When possible, some of these older clapboards were salvaged and reused on the house. 71 This practice of carefully researching and investigating the structure, and properly performing restorations based on this research, matches the most recent guidelines for the restoration and repair of wood during a restoration process. SOI guidelines recommend first the “identifying, retaining, and preserving wood features from the restoration period”, and further recommend that in repairing such

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features, if necessary, they should be “physically and visually compatible” with the original. Isham did just that.

Isham’s process of careful analysis of original materials is also seen with the interior work at the site. Various layers of paint on the interior walls and woodwork were removed in order to uncover the earliest treatment used. What was found was then utilized to restore the interior to its original appearance. The most recent SOI guidelines for restoring an interior recommend against “applying paint, plaster, or other finishes to surfaces unless the work can be substantiated with historical documentation”. Thus, once again, Isham followed the techniques recommended for today’s restoration projects.

What is inconsistent with today’s recommendations for restoration is an absence of focus on “modern improvements” to the site. The SOI definition for restoration states that “the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make the property functional” is appropriate. The installation of modern features such as heat, plumbing, and electric lighting was not part of the Isham’s restoration of the Hazard House, and the reasons for this are unknown. The decision to omit these additions may or may not have been part of Isham’s original proposal. It is possible that modern improvements were in fact intended for the Hazard house restoration, but factors such as money or other contributing

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parties acted as catalysts for a change in Isham’s plans. It is also feasible however, that such additions were never part of the restoration due to the fact that the site was intended to be a museum. Isham may have desired not to interfere with the original design of the structure by adding modern improvements, and in turn skewing the public’s perception of the historic home.

One aspect of Isham’s preservation approach is unique when compared to today’s preservation practice. It is an involvement and consideration of interior furnishing and decorations during the restoration process. Today’s SOI standards for restoration do not include guidelines for the furnishing or decoration of interiors, but rather are limited to structural work and architectural decorations. This issue was also touched upon by Isham during his public discourse in 1926. His focus on such interior details demonstrates that his preservation practice and techniques were not limited to architectural restoration, but included historical interpretation of the structure as well. He became involved with the Hazard House restoration project knowing from the start that it was to be utilized as a historic house museum, as “an object of pilgrimage” for visitors, and thus organized a restoration project which would fit this function.

When considering this focus on interpretation of the structure, it is inaccurate to say that Isham’s preservation philosophy involved restoring historic properties to multiple time periods in order to provide a progression of styles in the interpretation of the structure. Ronald Potvin’s article from 1989 makes this argument, stating that “He [Isham] preferred to retain features from various periods, sometimes within the same room, rather than restoring buildings to simply one


77 William Sumner Appleton to Roderick Terry, March 22, 1920, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 5; Wanton Lyman Hazard House. Pamphlet distributed by the Committee on Restoration, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 1.
period in their history”. While the finished product of Isham’s work may be a structure that includes additions or historic fabric, interior or exterior, dating from all different periods, this result was not a product of Isham’s ideology. In the case of the Hazard House, Isham in fact desired to remove from the structure both additions, including the kitchen lean-to addition, but the Hazard family and other members of the Historical Society fought for the addition added before the Revolution to remain with the house. In this way, the restoration is representative of the collaboration and politics surrounding the project. Isham did not work in isolation, but rather engaged in dialogue with a larger committee to make these decisions. The final product is not representative of Isham’s sole opinion.

**Colony House Restoration Work, 1927**

Soon after Isham became involved with the negotiations regarding the Hazard House, he also began working at the Colony House. Isham first addressed the issue of preservation at the site in Newport in a 1917 article published by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in Boston. Here again, as at the Hazard House, Isham’s role at the site was initiated by his colleague, William Sumner Appleton. In this document, Isham discussed in depth the history of the site and its structural alterations. Included were corresponding measured drawings of the building. At the end of the document, Isham made a plea for the structure’s preservation. He wrote:

> I think it will be plain, from this brief description and especially from the drawings, that the old statement that the like of the building was not in all the Colonies, was in the beginning quite true, and that even in its present altered and mutilated condition it is a monument of which the State should be proud and of which it should take the greatest care...It is to be hoped that the General Assembly will...free the old Colony House from...

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its present use and restore it to its ancient splendor, with the one great lower room, and the three rooms in the ‘Chambers’.  

Ten years later, the Newport Historical Society created a group named the “Association for the Restoration and Preservation of the Old State House in Newport, Rhode Island” to facilitate the work to be done at the site. This “General Committee” consisted of smaller committees, and the “Details of Restoration” sub-committee was headed by Norman Isham, as chairman.

A publication was circulated, year unknown, informing the public of the Committee that had been created to guide the restoration and preservation of the structure. Authors of this pamphlet were Roderick Terry, then President of the Newport Historical Society, and the Board of Managers, which included Isham. The Committee felt a responsibility to the State and its citizens to “to remove all evidence” that the building had been “used for other purposes than that for which it was designed, and to restore it to its original condition”. They made a plea to the public for help in financing the project, stating that the building’s “preservation should be a matter of intense civic pride”, and that the public should demonstrate their interest in the building by supporting the project financially. Donations were asked for, big and small, and different incentives were given to the public to become involved. The Committee reassured the community that they had “obtained the best architectural advice” in order to do a proper job in

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81 *Unknown Newspaper*, “Name Adopted. Association for Preservation of State House Organizers,” 1925, pg. 1.

82 Roderick Terry, *The Old State House in Newport, RI, Inc.*, Pamphlet distributed by the Board of Managers, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 3.

83 Roderick Terry, *The Old State House in Newport, RI, Inc.*, Pamphlet distributed by the Board of Managers, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 3.
the restoration and preservation of the structure.\textsuperscript{84} Undoubtedly, this is a reference to Isham, as chairmen of the “Details of Restoration” committee.\textsuperscript{85} The use of patriotism as a motivation for the restoration, and an incentive for community involvement, is representative of the overall preservation efforts occurring in Newport at the time.

The Colony House restoration officially began in October, 1927. Prior to the start of the project, the conditions of the structure were recorded. The focus was not on restoration, but rather on the preservation of the structure and on preventing future damage from weather. Two areas of deterioration were reported, “one on the north end and the other the south end of the roof”.\textsuperscript{86} A letter to Isham, from William Covell, urged the architect that steps should be taken as soon as possible “to make the roof tight”, as well as to address the window-glass and other such projects that “must be done to keep the weather out”. This attention to protective methods demonstrates an effort made at the site to first and foremost preserve, prior to restorations.

During the restoration process, much discussion centered around the paint on the exterior brick-work. The Committee at large proposed that the paint on the old bricks should be removed through the use of sand-blasting, but Isham did not approve of this method. A letter to Dr. Roderick Terry in September, 1927, stated that “Mr. Isham (if my memory is not at fault) said that the bricks are so old that under this treatment they would be liable to excessive wearing

\begin{footnotes}
\item[84] Roderick Terry, \textit{The Old State House in Newport, RI, Inc.}, Pamphlet distributed by the Board of Managers, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 3.
\item[85] Unknown Newspaper, "Name Adopted. Association for Preservation of State House Organizers," 1925, pg. 1.
\item[86] William W. Covell to Norman Morrison Isham, October 20, 1927, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.
\end{footnotes}

Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
away, or crumbling”, and that he advised as an alternative, “the use of paint-remover”. He sought a method which would be most sensitive to the original fabric of the structure. Isham’s concern for the preservation of historic elements and value in original material is very evident here. Isham’s proposal was disregarded however: his opponents were apprehensive about the money and labor costs of the paint remover method. Instead, the consensus amongst the committee was that “sand-blast not used to excess” would do the job. There was concern that in using a less severe sand-blasting method, steps would still need to be taken for the protection of the bricks from water once the paint was removed. The solution to this problem was discussed in a letter from The Waples Company, Inc., the contractors for the Colony House project, to Isham in November, 1927.

The letter stated that the application of a transparent waterproofing would be used to make the surfaces “impervious to water”. The use of sand-blasting as the exterior treatment at the Colony House was confirmed by two subsequent letters, the first was a letter written to Isham from The Waples Company, Inc. in November of 1927, which read:

As requested – we hereby propose to remove the paint, by first burning, and cleaning, by Sand Blast, all exterior brick and stone surfaces in the four elevations, including steps and chimneys, of the Old State House, Newport Rhode Island. We will also apply one coat of transparent waterproofing to the cleaned surfaces, giving you a first class job in every respect for the sum of Twenty-one hundred and thirty ($2130.00) Dollars. To point and patch up all brickwork, where necessary, after the paint has been removed, our price would not exceed Eight hundred and fifty ($850.00) Dollars.

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87 Unknown Writer to Roderick Terry, September 17, 1927, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 3.

Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.


A subsequent letter to The Waples Company, Inc., possibly from Isham, estimated for the cost of removing the paint through the methods of burning and sand blasting, as well as the cost for patching and pointing the brick and stone.\textsuperscript{90} As was seen multiple times at the Hazard House project, although Isham was chosen as the authority to guide the restoration, his judgment was often overruled by monetary concerns and the consensus of the larger committee. Despite Isham’s original objection to the use of sand-blasting, he in fact acted as the correspondent between the contractor and the committee to confirm the project.

Another significant aspect of the restoration project at the Colony House concerned the floor plan for the interior. Isham’s intent was to restore the first floor to its original one-room plan, and the second floor to its original design of three rooms.\textsuperscript{91} It was decided however, by the Executive Board of the Committee on Restoring the Old Colony House, that they were to “leave the partitions on the second floor as they now are, and not make three rooms there as at first planned”.\textsuperscript{92} This decision was in direct contradiction to Isham’s original proposal, thus once again, as with the treatment of the exterior brick work, Isham’s authority was overruled by the monetary concerns of the committee as a whole. Despite the final product at the Colony House not being representative of Isham’s intention, his value in original design and intent is evident.

Another prominent aspect of the restoration project at the Colony House was the installation of modern building systems. Potter Power, Groff Co. was employed to complete the plumbing and heating. The work included changing the piping at the site, installing radiators on

\textsuperscript{90} Unknown Writer to The Waples Company, Inc., November 25, 1927, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.


\textsuperscript{92} William W. Covell to Norman Morrison Isham, November 1, 1928, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 2.
the first floor and second floor that were then painted with “one coat of gold or aluminum bronze”, and cleaning of the furnace and the construction of a new smoke pipe. The company also furnished and installed “2 – new Toilet Combinations complete and one new lavatory”. The electrical work was completed by Scannevin & Potter Company at the site. Electric wiring was installed on the first floor, the stair hall, and the cellar space, and the number of outlets and switches was carefully noted in a letter to the “Committee of the Old Colony House” from the contractors. This letter also included estimates for the installation of chandeliers and lamps. The contractors noted that “the electric work in the old Court Room…is in good condition” and thus the only work to be done was the remodeling of switches, receptacles and wiring of outlets. They also stated that “The South Room has no electric wiring at present”, and therefore “no allowance” was made for that room. The contractors removed wood moldings and obsolete wiring, and renewed them with “up-to-date” standards. Here, Isham’s concern for the future functional nature of the site becomes evident.

Additional work completed at the Colony House in 1927 included the repair of the wood railing on the roof of the structure, which was “in poor condition” and in need of “quite a little

93 Power, Groff Co. to R. A. Smith, November 10, 1928, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.
94 Power, Groff Co. to R. A. Smith, November 10, 1928, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.
95 Scannevin and Potter, Electrical Contractors to Committee of Old Colony House, November 10, 1928, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.
96 Scannevin and Potter, Electrical Contractors to Committee of Old Colony House, November 10, 1928, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 2.
97 Scannevin and Potter, Electrical Contractors to Committee of Old Colony House, November 10, 1928, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 2.
repairing if not renewing". Additionally, new copper flashing and counter flashing around two flagpoles” were installed, and the copper roof gutters were cleaned and repaired. During this same year, the dormer windows on the west front were replaced and weather proofed, and a coating of preservation was put on the roof. As exemplified by earlier jobs performed at the site, it can be guaranteed that these changes made were informed by historic research, and with consideration to original material.

Subsequent restoration work is documented by a request made by Covell to Isham for further guidance concerning the project. Covell asked for specifications as to where the electricity wires should be installed and where the chandeliers should be placed on the second floor. He also discussed the installation of new chimneys, specifically asking “how much work must be done finding old flues so that new chimneys may be built? That is how much tearing out of walls, cutting of mason-work, etc.?" Additionally he asked what painting still remained to be done on the floors, walls and ceilings of the structure. Again in July, 1929, Covell urged Isham to make a list of the projects which still had to be completed at the site. Covell commented on the projects, stating:

I refer to the four chimneys not finished, to flashing over the holes in the roof when the flag-poles are removed, to planning off knots in the old floor which we agree (you and I at least) should be saved, placing the two guns from the ‘Tarter’, the tablets with short

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100 William W. Covell to Norman Morrison Isham, December 1, 1927, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.

101 William W. Covell to Norman Morrison Isham, November 1, 1928, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.
history of the building, the staircase and staircase-well painted, etc. I suggest these. You will remember others.\textsuperscript{102}

What is important to note about this letter is its confirmation of the decision made to plane off the knots of the original floor during the restoration project. This plan was opposed by Isham, yet it was carried out nonetheless. This choice serves as yet another example of where Isham’s opinion was not followed during the restoration project.

Several lists were made by Isham containing jobs “to be done” and “remain to be done”. No dates exist, however, which tell when these lists were created. One list was divided by interior and exterior treatments; Isham noted, among other things, that on the exterior the paint had been removed and waterproofing had been applied, in addition to treatments to the doors and window frames. Additionally, Isham commented that work had been done on the roof and on the chimneys. Regarding the interior, Isham stated that the partitions on the first floor had been removed and that in doing this, the original floor was exposed. It was also noted that work concerning electricity and radiators was completed. Regarding the work still to be carried out, there was little on the exterior to be done and on the interior, work to be finished included painting, plastering, and the installation of electrical fixtures.\textsuperscript{103} Another list, which appears to be earlier due to the fact that Isham noted more tasks still to be completed, was divided up by basement, first and second story, and exterior. Isham commented on work to be accomplished regarding lavatories, and the “restoration” of a few first story elements, along with the installation of electric fixtures and heat. The second story lists consisted of painting and repairing, one mention of “restoration” of the windows on the south side, and again a discussion

\textsuperscript{102} Unknown Writer to Roderick Terry, February 2, 1929, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{103} Norman Morrison Isham, \emph{Colony House}, List of work at the site, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 1.
of lighting fixtures and radiators. Isham’s exterior list is very short; he only commented on the need to restore chimneys and “old iron rails”. 104

The Colony House site was viewed as “one of the most interesting buildings in New England, architecturally and historically”, and its restoration and preservation was argued to be “a matter of intense civic pride”. 105 The Committee on Restoration, in conjunction with Isham’s guidance as chairman of the “Details of Restoration” sub-committee, worked to remove all evidence that the building had been used for subsequent modern purposes and “restore it to its original condition”. All while still maintaining and preserving the historic fabric that was left in it. As was seen at the Hazard House, this restoration project further demonstrates the patriotic motivation for preservation at this time in Newport, and the political environment in which Isham worked. The final product of the project once again, is not representative of Isham’s original intentions, but overall confirms those aspects of his preservation theory gleaned from the Hazard House restoration. The project documented the value Isham placed on original fabric and design intents, and the use of investigation to inform decisions, as part of his preservation theory.

**Colony House Work through a Modern Lens**

The Colony House restoration, like that at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, provides insight into Isham’s approach for the preservation in Newport and how his theory and techniques prove to be consistent with today’s most recent standards. Isham took the first step in the restoration project by documenting the structural history of the site and reporting on its condition

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104 Norman Morrison Isham, *The Colony House*, List of work to be done, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 1.

105 Roderick Terry, *The Old State House in Newport, RI, Inc.*, Pamphlet distributed by the Board of Managers, Newport Historical Society, Newport.

Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
prior to the start of any restoration work. This investigation and documentation of the site defines
an important aspect of Isham’s preservation practice and ideology. Similar investigation of
historic material was seen at the Hazard House, but that project lacked an official report, as was
made for the Colony House. The Colony House report was completed about ten years prior to the
restoration work and was forward thinking both in its plea for the restoration of the building as
well as in its concept when compared to modern day restoration practices. Secretary of Interior
standards for the restoration of historic properties states that “materials, features, spaces, and
finishes that characterize other historical periods will be documented prior to their alteration or
removal”.

Isham’s detailed architectural and condition report of the Colony House not only
acts as an essential component of the restoration project, but could be considered preservation in
and of itself. The site could virtually be reconstructed using Isham’s research and assessment.

The majority of the work completed at the site involved the restoration of already
existing features, including both the physical repair as well improvements such as painting to
restore the structure’s appearance. This effort to first and foremost repair features of the structure
is recommended by today’s most recent SOI standards, which state: “Deteriorated features from
the restoration period will be repaired rather than replaced”. During the process of restoration,
those features that could not be repaired were reconstructed. Furthermore, in reconstructing
elements, Isham was careful to undertake an architectural investigation of original fabric to guide
his decisions. This use of reconstruction when architectural elements were not salvageable is to
also consistent with today’s most recent SOI standards. The Secretary of Interior states that

106 United States, National Park Service, Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the

107 United States, National Park Service, Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the
“Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and where possible, materials”.

This pattern of repair, followed by informed reconstruction, is a consistent feature of Isham’s preservation approach, as the practice was also seen at the Hazard House restoration. What was not seen similarly at both sites was an attention to preventative methods. Throughout the Colony House restoration there were various efforts to not only restore, but also preserve the architectural features at the site. For example, steps were taken to waterproof the dormers and exterior bricks, and as well as to apply a coat of “preservative” to the roof.

A key insight into Isham’s preservation strategy and ideology can be gained from the decision to remove the paint on the exterior brickwork. While sand-blasting was ultimately the method chosen for the paint removal at the site, Isham originally proposed an alternative method that was turned down by the committee because it was too expensive. Isham was of the opinion that the bricks were too old to undergo sandblasting, and under such a harsh treatment would experience “excessive wearing away, or crumbling”. He proposed instead that the use of a paint-remover would be more appropriate. Isham’s acknowledgement that sand-blasting as a treatment for the exterior was too harsh proves to be very modern in thought. The SOI guidelines today advise against “using methods of removing paint which are destructive to masonry, such as

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110 Unknown Writer to Roderick Terry, September 17, 1927, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 3.

111 Unknown Writer to Roderick Terry, September 17, 1927, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 3.
sandblasting, application of caustic solutions, or high pressure waterblasting”.

112 Isham stayed consistent in this opinion, and during the restoration of the Brick Market between the years of 1928 and 1930, would again advise against the use of sand-blasting to remove paint.

The installation of modern building systems was a prominent aspect of the Colony House restoration project and further provides insight into Isham’s preservation approach. The outfitting of the historic structure with modern plumbing, heating, and electrical systems is consistent with the most recent standards given by the Secretary of Interior for restoration. The Secretary of Interior’s definition for restoration states that “the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems…to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project”.

113 The inclusion of modern improvements at the Colony House site, although not in harmony with the period in history which the restoration work sought to return the structure, demonstrates that Isham viewed historic buildings as utilitarian and functional spaces. Such modern improvements were not included in the Hazard House restoration, but the practice is consistent with what was reported to be an aspect of Isham’s discourse in 1926.

114 Part of Isham’s preservation philosophy, as was mentioned in his 1926 public lecture, included the idea that a historic structure should not be altered in a way that requires the removing of historic features or additions in order to return it to a specific restoration date. It can be presumed that Isham connected this view to the idea that modern materials should not be introduced to a structure in order to bring it back this restoration date. At the Colony House,

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Isham’s practice contradicts this theory. His proposal at the site was to return the second floor of the building to its original plan, requiring the creation of three rooms where, over time, the space had been altered into two.\textsuperscript{115} This plan would require a significant amount of altering of historic fabric, and introduction of modern materials. While this example demonstrates a contradiction between Isham’s theory and his practice, it also shows a consistent respect, by Isham, for the original appearance and plan for a building. At both the Colony House and the Hazard House, Isham viewed the appropriate date for restoration to be its original design.

Additionally, Isham’s intent to return the second floor to its original layout, while being inconsistent with his reported theories, remains consistent with today’s SOI standards. The Secretary of Interior recommends “identifying, retaining, and preserving a floor plan or interior space from the restoration period”, and that “failing to remove or alter an interior space, feature, or finish from another period” confuses “the depiction of the building’s significant”.\textsuperscript{116} Isham’s proposal to restore the structure to its original design was supported by a strong understanding of the structure’s history and design, and thus would be condoned by today’s standards.

The example of the Colony House adds yet another dimension to Isham’s unique preservation theory. At this site, the architect again focused on structural investigation to support his restoration changes and his desire to restore structures’ to their original appearance. The Colony House differs from the Hazard House project, however, in its lack of interpretation and its concentration on modern improvements. What remains consistent throughout is the architect’s foresight, and the matching of his practice to that which is practiced today.


Brick Market Restoration Work, 1928

While still involved at the Hazard House and reporting on conditions at the Colony House, Isham undertook work at the Brick Market in 1928. As he had at the previous two sites, Isham initially became involved at the Brick Market through his relationship with William Sumner Appleton, asked by the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities to create a report assessing the condition and future preservation of the structure. He created this report in reaction to the Society’s concern over the state of the structure and the alterations that were being made to it. An article published in the Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities in 1916, entitled “The Old Brick Market”, discussed the need for such a report. The article stated:

In the winter of 1914 our Rhode Island Vice-President, Mrs. F.E. Chadwick, called the attention of the Trustees to the unsatisfactory state of the Old Brick Market in Newport. Parts of the building were said to be in immediate need of repair, and for lack of a comprehensive report on the condition and needs of the building, alterations were gradually being made which did not conform with the original plan.  

In an effort to salvage the building from deterioration and poor repairs, SPNEA planned to “employ a competent architect” to examine the building and make a report concerning what “should be done in order to safeguard the future of the building”. Isham was chosen to fill this need and was employed by the Society to create this report, which “was well received and immediately bore fruit”.

Isham’s document very technically described the current layout and condition of the structure documenting measurements, materials, modern versus original, and signs of decay for

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Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
both the interior and the exterior of the structure. As a separate section within the report, Isham discusses the “original form of the building”, commenting on the history of structural changes to the Brick Market.\textsuperscript{118} Isham noted at the time of his assessment, that “only the brick shell and probably the roof” were original to Peter Harrison’s building.\textsuperscript{119}

Towards the end of this report, Isham provided suggestions for the “Future Treatment” of the building. He considered “the Market” to be an “asset to Newport” that had been neglected but could no longer afford to be treated with indifference. Isham stated: “Newport should carefully restore and preserve the architectural gem”, and he outlined two methods in which the preservation of the structure could be carried out.\textsuperscript{120} The report read;

The first [option] is to restore the building to exactly its original form, inside and out, except that the interior should be made with fire-proof floors, and to use it as Boston has used the old State House. The second is to restore the exterior exactly, leaving the inside as it now is. Prismatic glass can be used in the first story windows if light must be increased to make up for the loss of the plate glass front.\textsuperscript{121}

Isham reported that both methods were complicated “by the needed widening of Thames street southward”. He wrote that, in fact, it would be best to implement a modified version of the first plan, that being to restore both the interior and exterior of the building to its original form. This plan would include “moving the old building back far enough to allow the necessary addition to

\textsuperscript{118} Norman Morrison Isham, \textit{The Old Brick Market or Old City Hall. At Newport, Rhode Island}, January 11, 1915, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 5.

\textsuperscript{119} Norman Morrison Isham, \textit{The Old Brick Market or Old City Hall. At Newport, Rhode Island}, January 11, 1915, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 5.

\textsuperscript{120} Norman Morrison Isham, \textit{The Old Brick Market or Old City Hall. At Newport, Rhode Island}, January 11, 1915, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 5.

\textsuperscript{121} Norman Morrison Isham, \textit{The Old Brick Market or Old City Hall. At Newport, Rhode Island}, January 11, 1915, Newport Historical Society, Newport, pg. 5.

Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.
the width of the street in front”. He noted that there was ample space to do so, but if in moving the building, not enough land was afforded, he argued that “the buildings in the next lot are of little value” and more land could be obtained. As an alternative to this first plan, Isham also suggested that if a complete restoration proves to be too costly, then steps could be taken to restore only the exterior of the structure. In concluding his report, Isham made a strong plea for the restoration of the structure, writing that “At any rate, at any cost, Newport should not let this monument perish by destruction or by neglect”.

A year later, SPNEA reported on restoration work that was completed following the publication of Isham’s report. A 1916 article, published by the Society, stated that the exterior of the building was made weatherproof and fireproof, that the “old shingled roof” was replaced with a “fire-resisting slate roof”, and that all the exterior woodwork, including the wooden pilasters, were repaired.\textsuperscript{122} The exterior of the building was also painted during this restoration project and the exterior brick arches were replaced. It is unknown who was the leading figure in this earlier restoration. The article references “the Trustees”, so it is possible that the work was carried out by SPNEA.

Over a decade later, the issue of restoration at the Brick Market was revisited. John Nicholas Brown II purchased the structure in 1928 and thus became the facilitator for this phase of the project.\textsuperscript{123} Brown’s original plan for restoration was two-fold; he first planned to hire “prominent architects” to “study the original design of the building”, and subsequently these


Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{John Nicholas Brown II Papers}, Biographical Note (Providence: John Nicholas Brown Center), pg. 3.
architects, or architect, would then create plans for the structure’s restoration.\textsuperscript{124} Brown considered Isham to be “one of the most noted authorities on such matters”, and as a result he was hired to do both the architectural investigation of the structure and the restoration plans.\textsuperscript{125}

In planning for the project, Brown’s first concern was the restoration of the exterior. He saw it to be “in a bad state of dilapidation”, and thus necessitated immediate attention.\textsuperscript{126} His original proposal for the exterior restoration, as documented in a Newport News article in 1924, was to “remove the present paint by sand blasting”, restore the arches where the show window was at that time, and “entirely re-build the interior”, which was in poor condition.\textsuperscript{127} In 1928, Brown stated that he was “ready to undertake a partial restoration more in the nature of a ‘clean-up’ than finished restoration of the building”. He was concerned with the appearance of the building and desired for new work to “follow accurately the design of the old”.\textsuperscript{128} This first phase of restoration included the painting and patching of the brick-work, “much of which was crumbling with age”, and the painting of the wooden pilasters, cornice and window trim, which as Brown argued, was done “in such a way as to make all the woodwork sound”.\textsuperscript{129} The roof of

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\textsuperscript{124} Newport News, ”John Nicholas Brown: Summer Resident Who Has Lease of City Hall Announced,” March 31, 1924, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{125} John Nicholas Brown to Mayor of Newport and Board of Aldermen, March 31, 1930, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{126} John Nicholas Brown to Mayor of Newport and Board of Aldermen, March 31, 1930, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{127} Newport News, ”John Nicholas Brown: Summer Resident Who Has Lease of City Hall Announced,” March 31, 1924, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{128} John Nicholas Brown to Mayor of Newport and Board of Aldermen, March 31, 1930, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{129} John Nicholas Brown to Mayor of Newport and Board of Aldermen, March 31, 1930, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.
the structure was also made waterproof.\textsuperscript{130} Other exterior work that was performed included the installation of casement windows by Dudley Hardware Company, and the “paving, grading, and drainage for the back and side of the building”.\textsuperscript{131} Brown’s intention concerning the interior of the Brick Market was to not “have more than the necessary done”, as the future use of the site was still unsettled.\textsuperscript{132}

The treatment of the exterior brickwork was given the most consideration during the restoration process. Brown stated in 1928 that “eventually I should like to have the brick stripped of its paint, but perhaps for the moment it would be better to leave it exactly as is and not to attempt to remove the present paint or to put on new”.\textsuperscript{133} William Sumner Appleton wrote to Brown urging him, when removing the exterior paint, not to use sandblasting, but rather to use an alternative method, such as chemical removal. The letter read:

Our observation…is that in all the buildings we have seen the bricks have been permanently injured. The sandblasting seems to remove the baked outer surface and to expose a more porous interior…In the case of our own house here we employed some country workmen from Topsfield and they used chemicals to remove the paint and then washed down the building with muriatic acid…I hope you won’t mind my venturing the hope that you won’t sandblast the old Brick Market but will use some such process as we used here.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{130} John Nicholas Brown to Mayor of Newport and Board of Aldermen, March 31, 1930, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{131} Dudley Hardware and Co. (Builder’s Hardware and Supplies Wholesale and Retail) to Norman Morrison Isham, August 20, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.; L.D. Willcutt and Sons Company (Building Construction) to Norman Morrison Isham, September 5, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

\textsuperscript{132} John Nicholas Brown to Mr. Deveney (Vice President of L.D. Willcutt and Sons Co.), September 11, 1928, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{133} John Nicholas Brown to Mr. Deveney (Vice President of L.D. Willcutt and Sons Co.), September 11, 1928, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.

\textsuperscript{134} William Sumner Appleton to John Nicholas Brown, September 26, 1929, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.
The paint was in fact not removed, and a year later, the decision was made to re-paint the exterior. In April 1929, L.D. Willcutt and Sons Company, Building Construction, wrote to Isham inquiring about the plans for the exterior treatment:

   The matter of painting the exterior of the Old City Hall [The Brick Market] will be along before many weeks. We understand that it is your [Isham] desire and his [Brown] as well, to change the color somewhat. We would like therefore, if you have well defined color firmly fixed in your mind that you would bring or send us a sample.135

The paint on the exterior of the Market became an issue again in 1936, here yielding insight into the original reasons it was not removed in 1929. In a letter to Isham from John Nicholas Brown in November 1936, Brown informed the architect that The Newport Chamber of Commerce requested permission to remove the paint from the Market. Brown reflected on the reasons for not removing the paint during the 1928 – 1930 restoration. He stated:

   I have written them that we decided at the time of the restoration not to remove the paint (1) because the brick was porous and seemed to need a coating of paint for waterproofing and (2) in order to hide the difference in colour between the old and new.136

In another letter from November, 1936, to Mr. Lawton, the managing Secretary for the Newport Chamber of Commerce, Brown further discussed the decision to not remove the exterior paint. He added that in addition to the two reasons he provided earlier, the paint was not removed from the structure because “Mr. Isham also felt that paint had been used originally on the building”.137

Here Brown defers to Isham’s authority to support the decision made during the restoration process.

135 L.D. Willcutt and Sons Company (Building Construction) to Norman Morrison Isham, April 15, 1929, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.

136 John Nicholas Brown to Norman Morrison Isham, November 13, 1936, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.

137 John Nicholas Brown to Mr. Lawton (managing Secretary for the Newport Chamber of Commerce), November 13, 1936, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.
Subsequent to these exterior restorations, Brown was concerned with two major issues for the continuation of the project. The first of these “problems” according to Brown, dealt with “archeology” of the building. Brown intended “to have made, certain investigations of an archeological nature leading to the preparation of an accurate history of this monument”. He hoped that an account following this investigation would be published so that future generations would “have a definite and authoritative record” of the monument. Isham, considered by Brown to be “a recognized authority on such matters”, was asked to undertake this “careful investigation of the history of the building from its erection in 1762”. In carrying out the architectural investigation, the most recent construction on the interior was removed, revealing historic materials and other historical evidence considered by Brown to be “invaluable as historical evidence”. Extensive photographs were taken throughout this process, documenting original fabric and architectural lines. During this architectural investigation, among other such similar projects, the entire first floor ceiling was removed due to its poor condition, L.D. Willcutt and Sons Company, contractors for the Brick Market project, stated that “it could not possibly be utilized in the future re-arrangement of the restoration of the interior”. With the removal of the

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139 John Nicholas Brown to Mayor of Newport and Board of Aldermen, March 31, 1930, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.

140 *Old City Hall*, Brief typed report, thought to be by John Nicholas Brown., Brown University Library, Providence, pg. 1.


142 John Nicholas Brown to Mayor of Newport and Board of Aldermen, March 31, 1930, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island.

143 *The Story of the Old City Hall*, Pamphlet issued by the Newport Chamber of Commerce and the Newport Historical Society, Brown University Library, Providence, pg. 1.
ceiling, the inside of the second floor timbering was exposed, and it was determined that the second floor was not part of the original building, as it was so unlike the original roof.144

While Isham’s building archeology was removing all “badly constructed modern work”, Brown turned to address the issue of future use, so that the Brick Market project could be continued. Brown argued that “a monument of this kind, in order to remain intact, must have some vital purpose”.145 Before creating plans for the interior, Brown considered it necessary to decide upon the future occupancy of the building so that changes to the interior would be carried out accordingly. After considering a variety of uses for the building, it was decided that occupancy by the Newport Chamber of Commerce would be ideal. Brown commented on this occupancy:

I feel that the city of Newport will benefit in more ways than one. A priceless treasure will be preserved as the home of one of the agencies dedicated to civic usefulness. I can well believe that after the restoration has been accomplished, this building will become the Mecca of many tourists seeking historical and artistic beauties in New England.146

With the issue of future use concluded, Isham was instructed to prepare plans for the interior of the structure with occupancy by the Chamber of Commerce in mind. The plans were created to “suit the Chamber’s needs and at the same time … restore the building in a manner consistent with its original architectural feeling”.147 The specifics of these interior plans are described in a

144 The Story of the Old City Hall, Pamphlet issued by the Newport Chamber of Commerce and the Newport Historical Society, Brown University Library, Providence, pg. 1.


147 John Nicholas Brown to Mayor of Newport and Board of Aldermen, March 31, 1930, Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island, pg. 1.
newspaper article entitled *John Nicholas Brown to Restore Newport City Hall, Built in 1972*. The article reported:

> According to those plans, the first floor will contain a spacious lobby, vestibule, committee rooms, general office, heating plan and storage room. A grand committee room with two rows of windows on either side will occupy the major portion of the second floor for meetings of the chamber and civic affairs.\(^{148}\)

The Chamber of Commerce was in fact directly involved with the interior work of the structure. A letter from John Nicholas Brown to Isham in 1929 stated that, “Yesterday, Monday, I received a telephone call from our friends of the Chamber of Commerce in Newport who report that they are not ready to make specific suggestions in the plan for the Old City Hall”.\(^{149}\) He then continued to confirm with Isham what would be the best possible date to meet with the Chamber to discuss the interior alterations.\(^{150}\) A letter from Brown to Isham, dating from March of 1930, further discussed the necessary involvement of the Chamber of Commerce when making decisions regarding the installation of heating. The letter read:

> There will be many minor matters to be determined such as the type and method of heating. Since the Chamber of Commerce now are to be the tenants and I am to fade from the picture, I should certainly feel that the Chamber of Commerce should decide what type of heating they wish since after all it is they who must pay the bills.\(^{151}\)

This participation by the future occupants in making decisions at the site stress the careful adaptation by Isham of the structure for the organization’s needs.

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\(^{148}\) *Providence Journal*. "John Nicholas Brown to Restore Newport City Hall". March 30, 1930.


\(^{151}\) John Nicholas Brown to Norman Morrison Isham, March 31, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI, pg. 1.
Other interior alterations at the Brick Market included the painting of the interior, “all woodwork and walls”, while the floors were “stained and treated with shellac or wax, or varnish or oil”.152 Ardrey and Adams Fine Floors presented a proposal for the “vestibule and second story stair hall” to be laid out with diagonal and square pattern tiles.153 Additionally, Isham requested that masonry partitions surrounding the stairway be constructed, terra-cotta being the final choice for material.154 Whether or not these jobs were carried out is unknown.

In planning for interior alterations, specific attention was given to the decoration details of the interior. Correspondence between George E. Vernon and Company, “Makers and importers of fine furniture decorators and upholsterers”, demonstrated Isham’s careful consideration of the material and design for window hangings.155 Another letter regarding interior drapery was written to Isham, from the Crooker Company, Interior Decorators. This company provided a detailed estimate of the possible window and door coverings available, and their cost.156 Similarly, close attention was also paid to the interior hardware and lighting fixtures. A confirmation of order was sent to Isham from the Crooker Company outlining the different lighting fixtures that were to be installed in each different room throughout the

152 L.D. Willcutt and Sons Company (Building Construction) to Norman Morrison Isham, June 18, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

153 Ardrey and Adams Fine Floors Residence to Unknown Recipient, August 4, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

154 L.D. Willcutt and Sons Company (Building Construction) to Norman Morrison Isham, June 23, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

155 George E. Vernon and Co. (Makers and Importers of Fine Furniture and Decorators and Upholsterers to Norman Morrison Isham, September 1, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

156 Crooker Company to Norman Morrison Isham, August 27, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.
building. Another such bill, or confirmation of order, was sent to Isham from Dudley Hardware, outlining what locks, knobs, hooks, and other such hardware was to be installed in the Market.\(^{157}\)

The restoration also focused on plumbing, heating, and electricity for the structure. In May, 1930, L.D. Willcutt and Sons wrote to Isham, enclosing a number of bids sent by different companies regarding this work.\(^{158}\) L.D. Willcutt and Sons waited for “formal orders” from Isham before proceeding with the installation of any heating or plumbing systems. The jobs for this work went to R.B. Wilson, Jr., as confirmed in a letter to Isham from L.D. Willcutt and Sons in June of 1930. An estimate from the company described a plumbing project that will cost $666, including two water closet combinations, two “enameled iron lavatories”, and one “gas storage Heater”.

Regarding the interior plan, Brown wrote in an article entitled “Old City Hall, Newport, Rhode Island”, that “Mr. Isham hopes to treat [it] in an architectural manner consonant with the dignity and importance of the exterior”.\(^{159}\) Other articles contemporary with the restoration project found Isham’s work to be successful; “The Story of the Old City Hall” issued by the Newport Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the Newport Historical Society, stated that

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\(^{157}\) Dudley Hardware and Co. (Builder’s Hardware and Supplies Wholesale and Retail) to Norman Morrison Isham, August 20, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

\(^{158}\) L.D. Willcutt and Sons Company (Building Construction) to Norman Morrison Isham, May 22, 1930, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.

Quotes for the remainder of the paragraph are also from this source.

\(^{159}\) Old City Hall, Brief typed report, thought to be by John Nicholas Brown., Brown University Library, Providence, pg .2.
“The interior, although slightly changed, from the original, to provide adequate accommodation for the new use, still retains its Colonial atmosphere of simple beauty and dignity”.  

Brick Market was saved as a site, not only through its restoration, but also through its adapted new use as offices for the Newport Chamber of Commerce. Isham’s job was to react to the deteriorated state of the structure and the poor repairs being made to it, and create plans for its restoration and remodeling. Unlike the Hazard House and Colony House projects, there was no community involvement surrounding the restoration, yet there was still a patriotic motivation in that Brown saw the Brick Market as a “priceless treasure” that could be preserved and used for “civic usefulness”. As there were less participating parties involved with the project, Isham’s preservation theory was not tested as to how it would adapt to a differing political environment. Still, as Isham was not the authority facilitating the restoration, but rather a consultant working under Brown, the project is still not a product of his work in isolation. Demonstrated through this site was again Isham’s dedication to original material and authenticity, preservation of historic fabric, and inclusion of modern improvements. Where this site differs from the Hazard House and Colony House is in how Isham applies these aspects of his preservation to accommodate the structure’s interior for its new use.

**Brick Market Work through a Modern Lens**

The Brick Market Restoration further adds to an understanding of Isham’s preservation theory, and how his approach proves to foreshadow modern preservation guidelines. Isham recognized early on, through his condition report, sponsored by SPNEA, and his architectural

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160 *The Story of the Old City Hall*, Pamphlet issued by the Newport Chamber of Commerce and the Newport Historical Society, Brown University Library, Providence, pg. 2.

investigation of the structure for Brown, that no original historic fabric from Peter Harrison’s construction of the structure’s interior remained part of the building. It was this conclusion, made through extensive research and investigation, which led to Isham’s proposal for a restoration of the exterior and the remodeling of the interior, rather than a complete restoration of the building. As can be interpreted from a report in the Newport Herald on Isham’s discourse in 1926, the architect did not believe in falsely bringing a structure back to a decided upon restoration date. Rather, he is quoted as saying historic buildings should be left as they are.  

Isham followed this ideology at the Newport Brick Market. He recognized that there was no original fabric left on the interior of the structure and so did not create a false reconstruction of what it should have looked like. Instead, Isham recognized the historic significance of the exterior, and the functional opportunity of the interior as a modern space.

Isham’s execution of the restoration project in this way proves to be very modern in thought. In fact, Isham’s work at the Brick Market is an example of early adaptive reuse, or rehabilitation, which the Secretary of the Interior defines as “the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.” Isham’s intention was to create an interior which was both sensitive to the needs of the Chamber of Commerce, and also consistent and respectful of the restored, exterior of the structure.

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The restoration of the exterior further demonstrates how Isham’s treatment of the structure is consistent with today’s SOI standards. The careful consideration given to the painting of the exterior brick, both as to whether paint should be removed or repainted, and if repainted what color it would be given, is also consistent with SOI guidelines. For the treatment of masonry, the Secretary of the Interior does not recommend “removing paint from historically painted masonry”, and more importantly advises against “using methods of removing paint which are destructive to masonry, such as sandblasting, application of caustic solutions, or high pressure water blasting”. Concern for the deterioration of the brick-work is exactly the argument Isham made against sand-blasting the exterior during the restoration process. This forethought regarding appropriate treatment and concern for the preservation of original materials was a common theme of Isham’s preservation theory, the exterior brick-work treated in a similar manner by Isham at the Colony House. Furthermore, Isham’s concern for detail in regards to the exterior appearance of the Brick Market is also consistent with today’s most recent SOI standards. The Secretary of Interior recommends “repainting with colors that are historically appropriate to the building and district” and “repairing masonry features by patching, piecing-in, or consolidating the masonry using recognized preservation methods.” When corresponding with the contractors for the restoration project, Isham was particularly concerned with choice of paint color used, and urged Brown of the need for the exterior to be authentically represented. This attention to detail was consistently seen throughout Isham’s projects in Newport.

Isham’s plan to redesign, rather than restore or reconstruct the interior space, is also consistent with today’s most recent SOI standards for rehabilitation. According to the Secretary of the Interior, it is preferable to reproduce missing historic features if “adequate historical, pictorial, and physical documentation exists,” but an acceptable alternative is also to replace the
missing feature with “a new design that is compatible with the remaining character-defining features of the historic building.” Furthermore, it is acceptable to remodel the interior to “assure its continued use”. Isham did exactly this in recognizing that little original features remained at the Brick Market, and choosing instead to adapt the interior for its intended future use. Part of this adaptation of the interior as a functional space involved the installation of heating, plumbing, and electricity. This technique again, condoned by today’s SOI standards.164

**Isham's Preservation Theory as Gleaned from these Case Studies**

The study of the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, Colony House, and Brick Market restoration projects yields insight into Isham’s preservation approach as an architect. Both the commonalities and differences between these three case studies helps to formulate Isham’s preservation theory at the time of his work in Newport. Isham’s restoration practice was composed of four distinct ideals; the consideration of future use and functionality, a dedication to a structure’s original design, a use of architectural investigation to both document and restore a site, and an attention to interior details.

What can be learned first from these three Newport case studies is that Isham was concerned with functionality. This trait can easily be seen at both the Colony House and the Brick Market, although it plays out in different ways. At the Colony House, Isham demonstrated a dedication to functionality, the future intent, and the usage of the building through the installation of modern features such as plumbing, heating and electricity. This dedication paralleled that of restoring the structure to its original historic appearance. Isham clearly saw the Colony House not simply as a historic and architectural shell, but as a functional space.

Similarly, this dedication to the functionality of historic sites can be seen through Isham’s rehabilitation of the Brick Market, albeit with a different goal. At this site, prior to any interior work, there was attention paid to the future use of the structure, that being the rental of the site by the Newport Chamber of Commerce. As such, Isham adapted the interior for more modern functions.

While a focus on modern improvements was not present at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, there was still a clear concentration by Isham to the functionality and future use of the site. The Hazard House was restored with the intention of using it as a historic house museum visited by the public. With this use in mind, rather than concentrating on modern improvements to make the building functional, Isham focused his attention on the interior furnishing of the site. This focus on interior detail demonstrates an understanding that such an interpretation of the house would be useful in its future use as a museum.

In this way, Isham appropriately approached all three of these restoration projects as adaptively reused spaces. He viewed historic buildings as functional spaces, which through restoration, could be utilized in a modern way. In Newport, Isham exposed the functionality of structures either through modernization of the historic space or through interpretation, the site becoming an educational resource.

The second aspect key to Isham’s preservation theory is a dedication to a structure’s original layout when restoring the site. This idea is seen clearly at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House and the Colony House. At both sites, Isham’s original proposal for the structure’s restorations was for them to be brought back to the floor plan and appearance of their original construction. At the Hazard House, this approach meant removing both additions to the house, and at the Colony House it meant returning the second floor to three rooms. These plans did not
materialize due to the political environment of the projects and the differing parties involved, but they were the original intent. At the Brick Market, Isham’s dedication to the structure’s original appearance is represented primarily through the exterior restoration of the site, but also in the adaptive reuse of the interior. Here, Isham made the argument that no original material remained in the interior, and thus he decided not to create a false reconstruction of the interior as it existed. He could have restored the structure to another time period within the building’s history, thus retaining more historic fabric, but he chose not to. The only period of significance that Isham recognized was that of the site’s original design.

Another important element of Isham’s preservation approach involves the practice of investigating a site prior to any restoration work. Both at the Colony House and the Brick Market, prior to beginning restoration, Isham researched and documented the architectural history of the site, its structural transformations, its current condition, and provided an assessment for future treatment. These observations were compiled in an official report that aided in the restoration of the site at the time. Those reports have also proved to be a form of preservation in and of itself. While an official document was never created by Isham for the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, similar investigation was done throughout the restoration project, and prior to any changes made. An example of this method at the Hazard House would be the careful analysis of the interior wall treatments by taking off multiple layers of paint and wallpaper to reach the original paint color. This technical study of the history of the site, its architectural features, and its historic material demonstrates that Isham’s preservation approach was very scientific in nature.

The most unique element of Isham’s preservation approach is his concern with interiors. At each site, Isham not only restored the architectural structure, but also focused on interior
details and decorations. This practice can be seen at the Wanton Lyman Hazard House through his consultation regarding interior furnishings and at the Colony House and Brick Market, where Isham concentrated on paint color, lighting fixtures, and window draperies.

This approach is one of the only elements of Isham’s preservation strategy which does not correlate with today’s modern definitions of restoration work, as defined by the most recent Secretary of Interior standards and guidelines. Isham’s concentration on furnishing and decorating of the interior shows a combination of his role as restoration architect, and general architect by training, with each playing out at each site.

**Isham Returns to the Redwood Library as a Preservationist**

In the years following the completion of the 1915 architectural work at the Redwood, restoration projects were carried out throughout the Library. These jobs were documented in the Annual Reports of the Library, but no architect was reported in conjunction with the projects. Although it cannot be determined if Isham was directly involved with these restorations, his role in influencing these later projects is undoubtedly evident. Through an understanding Isham’s preservation theory, as gathered from the previous case studies, the trademarks of his work become obvious in characterizing this later Redwood restoration work.

The first of these projects was the restoration of the “President’s Room”, reported in July, 1921 by the directors of the Library. The report stated:

> the small room in the southwest corner of the old building has been restored, the decorations being in harmony with the original building as designed by Harrison, and in it have been placed the collection of books, so far as they remain, which was gathered when the Library was started. It is a very interesting room for anyone to visit.\(^{165}\)

In Isham’s condition report and recommendations for the Library, there was never mention to the “President’s Room”, and thus it was not in his original plans to restore this room. While Isham cannot be credited with this project, his influence in the restoration is obvious. In Isham’s original recommendations for the Library, he urged that any changes made at the Redwood be considerate of Peter Harrison’s original design for the building. This restoration of the “President’s Room” reflected this suggestion, the director’s arguing that its appearance was “in harmony with the original building”. So while it is not known whether Isham guided the project, it is clear that the Library Director’s valued his early suggestions and adhered them to later work.

A subsequent restoration project was carried out in July 1928. The Report of the Directors stated that:

In the interior a marked improvement has been made by the opening of the West room...this old building has now been cleared of its contents, and restored to the condition in which it was first left by the architect, Harrison, 180 years ago. Particular interest attaches itself to this inasmuch as it is believed to be the oldest Library room in actually use in the United States, and with its simply Colonial design one of the most beautiful.

Again, the architect of this restoration work remains unknown, but Isham’s influence for the project is clear. In his original recommendations for the Library Isham suggested that the Harrison Room be restored “in the strictest accord with the architectural lines given by Peter

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166 “Report upon the Present Condition and the Future Development of the Redwood Library at Newport, RI,” Norman Morrison Isham and John DuFais to Roderick Terry, March 31, 1914, Redwood Library, Newport, RI, pg. 7


Harrison, the original architect.\textsuperscript{169} This suggestion made in 1915 for future improvements to the Library, was carried out thirteen years later. In this way, the 1928 restoration of the Harrison Room was directly influenced by Isham. A respect for the architect’s opinion in his early assessment and suggestions for the Library is clear through this example.

A year later, the restoration of the Children’s Room was mentioned in the Annual Report of the Directors. Once again, the architect guiding this restoration was not mentioned. Nevertheless, Isham’s influence in the project can be seen again. This 1929 restoration of the Children’s Room is in adherence to Isham’s original 1925 suggestion that, in altering the Library, all future work should be considerate of Harrison’s original intent. This proposal was followed in this 1929 restoration, the Director’s reported that the room was “made in harmony with the Harrison Room out of which it opens”. This example further confirms a consideration of Isham’s original recommendations for the Library and a respect for his authority.

While the 1970 Historic American Building Survey reported that Isham restored the interior of the structure between the years of 1912 and 1931, it cannot be said for certain if it was Isham that guided these restoration projects subsequent to his confirmed architectural work in 1915.\textsuperscript{170} Regardless of whether or not Isham was the architect who led these restorations, it is clear that the proposals in his original assessment of the building were respected and considered. During his 1915 architectural work, Isham intentionally distinguished between the historic portions of the structure as he recognized that they merited distinctly different approaches. In separating the Library in this way, Isham in turn drew attention to the significance of the historic

\textsuperscript{169} "Report upon the Present Condition and the Future Development of the Redwood Library at Newport, RI," Norman Morrison Isham and John DuFais to Roderick Terry, March 31, 1914, Redwood Library, Newport, RI, pg. 7

\textsuperscript{170} Historic American Building Survey. 1970. No. RI-100, Redwood Library Archives, Newport.
elements of the site. With the documentation available, it could be assumed that Isham was in fact the first to recognize the value of these historic elements and provide suggestions for their restoration. In this way, Isham had a direct influence on the restoration projects carried out at the Library through both his recognition of the historic fabric at the site, and his suggestions for future development.

The first and only time that Isham is documented as leading a restoration at the Redwood is in 1931. In the Annual Report of 1929, the Directors state that “There remains in our building only one room in which there is any possibility of improvement, and that is the general reading room. It is the question of the proper treatment to be given to this room that is so difficult. It has not yet been decided whether to attempt its renovation”.\textsuperscript{171} It was reported in the Report of the Directors in July of 1931 that in fact the restoration had been completed. They noted the work in the Reading room to have been the “most important work of restoration”.\textsuperscript{172} The report stated that;

By Resolution of the board, permission was given by the President to have the Reading Room renewed and decorated in harmony with the other rooms of the building, and work upon such improvement was begun the first of March, and now at the four and a half months, it is just reaching completion, the length of time being caused by the fact that it was discovered that it was necessary to renew the entire building from roof to cellar. With a new copper cupola, and a slate roof; with steel beams having been used to reinforce the ceiling and the walls, in fact everything new, it is believed that the room is in better condition than when first built.\textsuperscript{173}

Isham is mentioned directly in conjunction with this restoration is in the Annual Report of the Librarian in 1932, who writes on behalf of the Library Staff’s “Keen pleasure and satisfaction in

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{172} “Report of the Directors of the Redwood Library and Athenaeum”, 1931, MS, Redwood Library Archives.

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having a handsome and comfortable sunny room in which to read work”.  

She stated that “Without making any major changes in the original plan of the room as designed by George Snell in 1858, Mr. Norman M. Isham developed a beautiful Colonial room which is light and spacious”.  

She shared that even the inscription above the door leading into the reading room was designed by Mr. John Howard Benson and “is in keeping with the early Colonial architecture of the room”.  

The Directors noted that with these changes, the building “is in better condition than when first built”.  

Without photographs or detailed description of the condition of the roof and cupola, it will remain unknown what necessitated the changes that Isham made. Nevertheless, complete changes and replacements of such elements as the slate roof and cupola seem extreme, and would not be necessitated unless the condition of the elements was too deteriorated to repair. According to the most recent Secretary of Interior Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties, it is not recommended to replace an “entire roof feature from the restoration period such as a cupola or dormer when the repair of materials and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts are appropriate”, just as it is not recommended to fail to “reuse intact slate or tile when only the roofing substrate needs replacement”.  

What is recommended is to repair a roof and its components with compatible substitute material and not to do a


complete replacement. Replacements are in some situations necessitated, and the Secretary of Interior Standards provides stipulations for such kind of work.

Through analysis of Isham’s previous case studies in Newport, it can be concluded that the architect would not have condoned a new cupola and slate roof unless absolutely necessary. One of the most prominent aspects of Isham’s preservation theory, as gleaned from the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, Colony House, and Brick Market case studies, is that Isham was dedicated to maintaining original material and authenticity in his restorations. His effort to preserve original materials where possible can be seen at the Colony House when Isham opposed the use of sandblasting of the exterior brick-work in order to remove paint, as it would wear away at the bricks. Furthermore, his emphasis on authenticity can be seen at the Hazard House with the repair of the exterior clapboards using appropriate original construction, and with the reuse of old clapboards from other portions of the house when repairs could not be made. In this way, Isham would not have sacrificed original historic material with the creation of a new cupola and installation of a new slate roof unless they were absolutely beyond repair.

Furthermore, through this understanding of Isham’s preservation theory and restoration approach at Colonial Newport sites, it can be guaranteed that in replacing these features, extensive historic research and architectural investigation was carried out prior to any changes being made. Isham would have used remaining historic fabric to reconstruct a historically accurate cupola and roof, mimicking the original both in material and construction. Through these conclusions drawn from Isham’s previous restoration work, the “Reading Room” restoration at the Redwood contributes in proving that Isham’s work mirrored today’s most recent SOI standards. The Secretary of Interior states that “replacing an entire feature from the restoration period that is too deteriorated to repair may be appropriate,” but they recommend that
the remaining physical evidence should be used as a model to reproduce the feature and that the same material is preferred but that a “compatible substitute material may be considered.”¹⁷⁹

The details surrounding restoration work at the Redwood Library overall are somewhat ambiguous. Yet through an understanding of Isham’s original involvement at the Library in 1915, and an understanding of his preservation theory from an analysis of other Newport case studies, Isham’s role at the Library becomes clear. While not credited with the restoration projects, Isham both directly and indirectly influenced the work and how it was carried out.

Conclusion

It is through his restoration work at some of the city’s most prominent Colonial architectural sites that Norman Morrison Isham came to shape preservation in Newport, and as a result, created a city-wide movement during the early twentieth century. The preservation theory he applied to the Redwood Library, the Wanton Lyman Hazard House, the Colony House, and the Brick Market, demonstrate Isham’s unique combination of architect, antiquarian, scholar, and archeologist, and in turn the complexity of his restoration approach. Isham did not limit himself to structural restoration, but rather sought to restore the site as a whole through considering issues such as interpretation and future functionality of the building. While Isham addressed each project individually in this way, the preservation theory he applied remained constant, demonstrating his value in historic and architectural investigation to appropriately restore a site to its original form. The final product of Isham’s restoration work however, was not always representative of his preservation theory overall, but rather how it was reacted to by other parties involved, and in turn, how Isham adapted to the unique political and social environment Newport presented. While Isham worked in the context of the Colonial Revival, and he himself was a

¹⁷⁹ T. T. Pitman to Norman Morrison Isham, December 23, 1927, Newport Historical Society, Newport, RI.
traditionalist, his restoration approach proves to be modern in thought, his techniques and theories foreshadowing modern standards and guidelines for the restoration of historic structures. In this way, knowledge of Isham’s preservation theory becomes part of a larger dialogue, his work acting as a window into the history of preservation in the twentieth century.
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Acknowledgments

I would first and foremost like to thank my professors, Dr. Zipf and Dr. Garman, for their continual enrichment and encouragement throughout my undergraduate career. The critical thinking and research skills they instilled in me provided me the ability to be successful with this project. I would specifically like to thank Dr. Zipf for her endless patience and encouragement as my advisor throughout this process. Her enthusiasm and confidence in this project was invaluable to its success. Within the community I would like to thank Ingrid Peters and Bert Lippincott at the Newport Historical Society, and Lisa Long from the Redwood Library, for helping to uncover resources that were vital to my research. I would also like to thank Arnold Robinson for sharing his knowledge of the subject, and helping to brainstorm ideas for my own research. Finally I would like to thank my family, my mom and dad for their endless support and confidence in my abilities, and my friends and roommates, for being available to manage stress and discuss ideas.