

Thames Street Area Study
Thames Street between Washington
Square and Memorial Boulevard
Newport
Newport County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-337

HABS
RI,
3-NEWP,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HABS
RI
3-NEWP
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RI-337

THAMES STREET AREA STUDY

Thames Street Between Washington Square and Memorial Boulevard

NEWPORT, NEWPORT COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND

The settlement of Newport began in 1639, and Thames Street developing south from Washington Square, in a straight line parallel to the shore, was one of the first streets. By the early years of the 18th century the compact part of town extended as far south as Cannon Street (now Memorial Boulevard). Since Thomas Street gave access to many of the important wharfs it became increasingly important as a commercial street during the 18th century. Merchants continued to live on Thames Street during this period, and a fair number of buildings survive from the 18th century which in spite of alterations, still suggest the scale and architectural character of the area. In the 19th century building served primarily commercial purposes. Many buildings from the mid-century and just after, often of wooden construction, three and four stories high, and usually with Italianate detail, survive from this period. They are only slightly larger in scale than the 18th century buildings and with them set the basic character of the streetscape. A few buildings, by their size or their architectural distinction, stand out from this general context, including the 18th century Brick Market at the north end of the street, the 20th century Post Office at the south, and a few larger masonry or cast iron buildings that are characteristic of the commercial architecture of the later 19th century. In the mid-20th century the street, which has preserved its historic appearance, is subject to forces of radical change. Included in the Newport survey of 1970 by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission are 14 Historic American Buildings Survey photos (1969, 1970) of groups of buildings as follows:

Thames Street

Photos 1, 2.

Brick Market, 127 Thames Street; on the west side of Washington Square; built 1761, Peter Harrison, architect; see also under Brick Market (RI-276).

124-128 Thames Street; southeast corner Washington Square and Thames Street; H. K. Young Building, now Harold's Camera Centre; brick, rectangular, originally three-stories, hipped roof, Italianate detail; built 1890, third story and hipped roof removed, ground floor altered.

130 Thames Street, Singer Sewing Center; brick and cinder block, one-story, glazed shop front, built 20th century.

132 Thames Street, Popple's Mens Clothing and Shoe Store; asbestos shingle front with stucco and brick sides and rear, three stories, flat roof modillion cornice on front with inset gable at the center, pedimented windows on upper two stories, glazed shop fronts on ground floor; built mid-19th century, altered.

134-136 Thames Street; Nicholas Tillinghast Apothecary before the Revolution, now vacant; frame, two-story, hipped roof house; built mid-18th century, much altered with glazed shop fronts on ground floor, asphalt shingle walls; the only surviving 18th century house in the block between Washington Square and Mary Street.

138-142 Thames Street, Sherman Building, now Herman Mines Shoes; brick with cast iron facade, three-stories, flat roof with tall cornice, slender iron columns with Ionic capitols on each floor, columns widely spaced with large glazed areas between, iron front returns one bay at the corners; built late 19th century, ground floor partly altered.

144-150 Thames Street; J. J. Newberry's; one-story front section, glazed entrance level with yellow brick wall above, two-story red brick rear section; rear built mid-19th century, altered, front built mid-20th century.

156-160 Thames Street, Newport Clothing Center and The Music Box; one-story, glazed shop fronts and red brick walls enframed with white wooden fluted pilaster and denticulated cornice; built 1952. Two exterior photos. (1970).

Photo 3.

162-164 Thames Street; Aronson's Jewelers; one-story, flat roof, glazed shop fronts framed in polished marble walls; built 20th century, possibly a remodeling of earlier buildings on this site.

166-170 Thames Street; Auditorium Building, now Ben's Furniture and Marcucci's Submarine Sandwich; stucco front with shingle sides, three-stories, flat roof with denticulated cornice at the front, glazed shop fronts on ground floor, eight bays of double hung windows on upper floors set in shallow arcade that rises through both stories; built over the second half of the 19th century.

172 Thames Street; Potter and Co.; asphalt shingles, seven-bay front, four bays on left three stories high with coved cornice, three bays to the right two-stories, flat roofs, glazed shop fronts on ground level, built 19th century, altered.

172-176 Thames Street; Thom McAnn Shoes; asphalt shingles, three-stories flat roof, three bays, glazed shop fronts on ground floor; built 19th century.

178-180 Thames Street; southeast corner Thames and Mary Streets'; Tops Restaurant; frame with shingles, three-stories, shallow hipped roof, bracketed cornice; built mid-19th century, may incorporate earlier buildings on this site.

182-184 Thames Street: Franklin Printing House and E. R. Colitz, Optometrist; frame with clapboard front and shingle rear, two stories, flat roof, glazed shop fronts on ground floor, two projecting bay windows on upper floors; built later 19th century.

186-190 Thames Street; Paradise Cocktail Lounges; one-story, glazed store fronts in wooden framing, brick rear; stamped sheet metal ceilings; built late 19th century, altered.

190-192 Thames Street; Horgan Building, now Sullivan Fuel Oil and Jordan's Jewellers; brick, two stories, flat roof, stepped parapet at the front, glazed shop fronts on ground floor; built late 19th century, facade built 1935.
1 exterior photo (1970).

Photos 4,5.

196-198 Thames Street; Temple Shalom; one-story, flat roof, aluminum siding on front; built 20th century, may incorporate 19th century store building on this site. 200 Thames Street; Herz Brothers Cigars; one story, flat roof, brick with glazed shop front; built 20th century, may be part of earlier building with Temple Shalom to the left.

202 Thames Street; northeast corner Thames Street and Cotton's Court; Hammett Building, now Chase and Chase; frame with clapboard, three-bay front x eleven bays, three-stories, hip roof, bracketed eaves, Italianate detail; built mid-19th century. later glazed shop front.

206 Thames Street; southeast corner Thames Street and Cotton's Court; George Champlin Building, now Embassy Restaurant; frame with clapboards and shingles, rectangular with narrow end to the street, two-stories, gambrel roof; built 1785, extensively altered including Italianate false front in the 19th century and plate glass and polished marble shop front in the 20th century; 204 Thames Street and adjoining to the north was similar, demolished since 1952.

210-212 Thames Street; northeast corner Thames and Church Streets; Narragansett Building, now Waldron's and Al Gamins Company; frame, some original flush boarding survives, wooden and asbestos shingles elsewhere, two-stories, flat roof, bracketed cornice, round headed windows, Italianate detail; built mid-19th century, altered including glazed shop fronts.

214 Thames Street and 511 Church Street; southeast corner Thames and Church Streets; Seabury Building, now part of Walsh Brothers; frame with clapboards and later surfaces, extended rectangular building with narrow end to Thames Street, two-and-a-half stories, gable-on-hip roof at the front with gable and gambrel roofs at the rear; built late 18th century, altered including glass and stucco store front.

216-222 Thames Street, northeast corner Thames and Frank Streets; Walsh and Brothers; frame with shingles, three stories, flat roof, bracketed cornice at the front, Italianate detail; built circa 1885, front altered including glazed store front at ground level, stuccoed second floor for sign, asbestos shingles on third floor.

224 Thames Street, southeast corner Thames and Frank Streets; Horgan Building, now Browns Bait and Tackle Shop; random ashlar brownstone, long rectangular building with narrow end (four-bay) to Thames Street, three stories, flat roof, molded cornice, wall surface articulated with piers and string courses; glazed shop front, with cast iron columns, the first of a series of tall masonry commercial buildings on Thames Street, built circa 1885.

226 Thames Street; James J. Burke's; frame with later shingles, rectangular with narrow end to the street, two-and-a-half stories, gable roof rebuilt; built mid-18th century, extensively altered including three-story Italianate false front built mid-19th century.

Northeast corner Thames and Mill Streets; laundry; two-story gable roof section to the rear with one-story brick additions and parking lot to the front; begun circa 1900. 2 exterior photos (1970).

Photo 6.

240-244 Thames Street, southeast corner Thames and Mill Streets; Byan's Sporting Goods; brick with aluminum sheathing, two stories, flat roof, glazed shop front; built 20th century.

246 Thames Street; With a Little Help From Our Friends Leather Shop; frame with clapboards, three stories, gable roof, three bay front, Italianate detail; probably built mid-19th century, replacing an 18th century structure on this site.

250 Thames Street, Sheehan Building, now Sassafras Discotheque; brick with brownstone quoins and window trim, three stories, four-bay front, flat roof, bracketed cornice with decorated wooden parapet, glazed shop fronts on ground floor with iron columns; built 1894.

254 Thames Street; Midtown Spa; frame with flush board on front, clapboard or brick veneer sides, rectangular with narrow end to street, two-and-a-half stories, gable roof, Italianate detail; built circa 1850, ground floor altered.

264 Thames Street; William P. Clarke Company; brick and stucco, one story, flat roof, glazed shop front; only surviving fragment of the Rhode Island Union Bank Building, built 1817; Asher Benjamin, architect.

266-268 Thomas Street; Skippers Dock; shingled, one story, flat roof, glazed shop front; built 20th century, may be a remodelled fragment of the United States Hotel, built on this site mid-19th century.

Southeast corner Thames and Pelham Streets; Newton Building, now K's Melody Lounge; rock faced ashlar, rectangular, two bays (front) x five bays, three stories, flat roof, modillion cornice, walls articulated with Romanesque arcades rising through three stories with relieved spandrel panels between floors; 1 exterior photo (1970).

Photo 7

282 Thames Street; Newport Savings Bank, now The People's Credit Union; red brick with brownstone quoins, three-bay front, three stories, low hipped roof, rusticated brownstone doorway flanked by large windows; built 1859-1876, upper window frames probably altered.

286 Thames Street; southeast corner Thames and Green streets. Kinsey Building, now Rhode Island Hospital Trust; rough faced red brick with sandstone trim, rectangular with projecting corner bay and diagonal entrance bay at the corner, two stories; hipped roof with gables over the bays, arched doorway in rusticated sandstone, tall brick chimneys; built 1892.

302-306 Thames Street, northeast corner Thames and Franklin Streets; Lawton Hammett Agency; asbestos shingles, rectangular main block, five-bay front, rear ell, two stories, gable roof with heavy modillion cornice, glazed shop fronts on ground floor; built mid-19th century, perhaps as remodelling of earlier building, later alterations.

Thames Street between Franklin Street and Memorial Boulevard; U. S. Post Office and Customs Office; large rectangular building with recessed diagonal corner bays, rusticated stone ground floor, tall brick upper floor with large Palladian windows, stone cornice, symmetrical seven bay facade; built 1916, James A. Wetmore, architect. 1 exterior photo (1970).

Photo 8

243-245 Thames Street, southwest corner Thames Street and Market Square; Tillinghast House, now Gray Typewriter Company; frame with clapboards, a rectangular, two story, gable roof with plaster cove cornice now boarded in; built circa 1710-1720, later shop front on ground floor.

249-253 Thames Street; Sherman Building, now fish and chips lunch room and barber shop; frame with clapboards, two stories, gable roof with gable end to the street, Italianate detail; built circa 1860-1870, later shop front on ground floor.

257-259 Thames Street, northwest corner Thames Street and Bowen's Wharf; Carry Building, now Mario's Liquor and Deli; frame with clapboards, rectangular, four-bay front, three stories, flat roof with deep bracketed cornice, Italianate detail; built circa 1860, later shop fronts on ground floor.

261-265 Thames Street; southwest corner Thames Street and Bowen's Wharf; Robert Stevens House, now Night Owl Restaurant and United Shoe Repair; built circa 1790; see also under Robert Stevens House (RI-306).

267 Thames Street; Franklin Cafe; brick and concrete block with glass shop front, one story, flat roof; built 20th century.

269-271 Thames Street; Pelham Cafe; frame with asphalt brick siding, square front block, four-bay front, three stories, low hip roof with bracketed cornice, Italianate detail; built circa 1870, two-story rear ell may be a remodelled 18th century building. 1 exterior photo (1970).

Photo 9

273 Thames Street; J. N. Furniture; frame with clapboards, three stories, low hip roof, simple Greek Revival detail; built circa 1840, later glazed shop front on ground floor and large display windows on second floor.

277 Thames Street; Heidler Building, now Jim's Place; frame with clapboards, four-bay front, three stories, low hipped roof with bracketed cornice, Italianate detail, sawn wood ornament; built circa 1875, store front altered; gambrel roofed house adjoining at the rear, built 18th century.

279 Thames Street; southwest corner Thames Street and Baker Court; Sherman Clark House; frame with later stucco, rectangular, two-and-a-half stories, gambrel roof, narrow and with later shop front on Thames Street, original six-bay front with pilastered doorway on the side facing Baker Court; built before 1874.

281-283 Thames Street; northwest Thames Street and Sayer's Wharf; Wickham House, later Sayer Building, now Tides In Restaurant and Western Union; frame with clapboard front and asphalt shingle sides, original rectangular house, two stories, gambrel roof with end toward Thames Street; built early 18th century, new front with shop windows and flat roof with deep cornice added 1908. 1 exterior photo (1970)..

Photo 10

285-289 Thames Street; southwest corner Thames Street and Sayer's Wharf; Clark Cook House, now Candy Store Restaurant; frame with later stucco and clapboards, rectangular main block, five-bay front to Thames Street, two-and-a-half stories, gambrel roof, rear ells; built circa 1780, extensively altered.

291-293 Thames Street; Thrift Shop; frame with asphalt shingles, three-and-a-half stories, gable roof with three-bay gable end to the street, bracketed eaves; built circa 1870.

295 Thames Street; E. L. Freeman Company; frame with clapboard, two stories, gable roof with gable end to the street; built 18th century with entrance at the side facing alley, remodelled with shop front on Thames Street 19th century. 1 exterior photo (1970).

Photos 11, 12

Northwest corner Thames Street and North Commercial Wharf; Ferretti Building, now Frenchy's; frame with clapboards, rectangular, three-bay front with wide projecting center bay, three stories, flat roof with modillion cornice, sawn and carved wooden ornament including corner pilasters with Corinthian capitals, one story rear wing; built circa 1900, later shop front.

Northwest 303 Thames Street, northwest corner Thames Street and Commercial Wharf; Newport Trust Company, now Industrial National Bank; brick with limestone and marble trim, cruciform plan with short arms, single high story for banking room at the front with two stories of office at the rear of same height, hipped roofs with modillion cornice, Ionic distyle in antis facade with marble columns, carrying a high attic story with segmental pediment, and richly embellished with carving, skylighted banking room with marble faced tellers cages; built in between 1893-1907.

1 exterior photo (1970); 1 interior photo (1970, Newport Trust Company).

Photo 13

307-311 Thames Street; southwest corner Thames Street and Commercial Wharf; Newport Tire, Inc., frame with clapboard, two stories, hipped roof, glazed shop front; probably built 20th century, earlier shingled and clapboarded outbuildings to the rear.

313-317 Thames Street; Colonel Sherbourne House, now Roman Gardens Spaghetti House; frame with clapboards, square two stories, hipped roof; built before 1800, extensively altered.

319 Thames Street; Carr's Linen Supply; square front block, frame with clapboards and flush three-bay front, three boarding stories, low hipped roof, bracketed eaves, Italianate detail, built circa 1860-1870; earlier rear wing, frame with clapboards, two stories, gable roof, four-bay front facing alley to the side, built circa 1800.

325-329 Thames Street; Army Navy Surplus; frame with clapboards, square three-bay front, two-and-a-half stories, mansard roof with bracketed eaves; built circa 1870-1880.

331-335 Thames Street; The Aquarius Ace, The Brass Lantern, The Fortune Cookie, frame with flush boarding, square, four-bay front, three-and-a-half stories, low hipped roof with deep bracketed eaves, Italianate detail; built circa 1600, ground floor altered. 1 exterior photo (1970).

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Historic American Buildings Survey 1969 Newport, Rhode Island Project are sponsored by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman; Operation Clapboard, and the Preservation Society of Newport County, and was carried out by HABS under the general direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, and supervised by Osmund Overby (University of Missouri), Project Supervisor. The photographs were taken in 1970 by HABS Photographer Cervin Robinson.