

**The John Stevens House at 30 Thames Street**  
**Newport, Rhode Island**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>The John Stevens House Architectural Analysis .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Thirty Thames Street through History .....</b>	<b>6</b>
John Steven’s House 1705 through 1900 .....	6
Navy and Laborer Tenement House.....	10
Restoration and the Present .....	12
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Appendix A: Current Photographs of Property.....	16
Appendix B: Figures .....	19
Appendix C: Building Evolution of House and Property .....	22
Appendix D: Chain of Title.....	27
Appendix E: Architectural Guidebook Summary .....	35
Appendix F: Integrity and Significance .....	36
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>37</b>

### **The John Steven's House Architectural Analysis**

The John Stevens House is a five-bay wide, two and one half story story, clapboard and wood shingle building with a side-gabled roof. It is set on a stone foundation bordering the sidewalk along the corner of Thames and Sanford Streets and faces west near the downtown of Newport, Rhode Island. The John Stevens House is found in a densely-built neighborhood south of Island Cemetery and north of Washington Square. An impression of a quaint New England town of the past is given with its mix of Colonial Architecture and green space. The Georgian Colonial building is two rooms deep, except where it borders Sanford Street, where the building extends out one room further with two stories giving the building a L shaped layout. Opposite the ell is a small area of green space and outdoor brick patio.

The property was originally part of the land acquired by the Stevens' family of Newport, known for their stonecutting and marble work. The land was granted to the first John Stevens in 1705 by Nathaniel Coddington, and was described as southerly on the land of Elizabeth Messenger, westerly on a highway, easterly of land of the grantor and northerly on land for a way.<sup>1</sup> G.H. Richardson, Newport Historian, claimed that the south end of the building was built in 1709, with the north end built in 1750.<sup>2</sup> No land evidence records exist prior to 1827 however to support this claim about the building. The land itself can be attributed to John Stevens I and John Stevens II though the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> With the absence of a dwelling in a 1758 Ezra

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<sup>1</sup> Though unable to trace the land evidence records past 1827 due to their damaged condition, a newspaper article found at the Newport Historical Society references the original land deed to John Steven I that is located at the John Stevens Shop. "Two Centuries in One Family." Unknown Newspaper in "Thames Street to Washington Street, Architectural Heritage of Newport Workbook." Newport: Newport Historical Society.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. "Table of Contents – 30 Thames St."

<sup>3</sup> City of Newport, R.I. Survey Map Plat Records. Book 1, 85. Newport Historical Society.

Stiles map, the house is estimated to be built between 1758 and 1777 by the author.<sup>4</sup> John Stevens III had interest in real estate as well as the family business and the house at the current address at 30 Thames Street is considered to be the oldest property he owned and where the stonecutting business began. The shop at its current location of 29 Thames Street was built across the street before 1773 for John Stevens III.<sup>5</sup> John Stevens II and John Stevens III both lived in the dwelling at the corner of Thames and Sanford Street with its proximity to their business. In 1844 the house was part of the “homestead estate” of the property and was west of the “stone lot” showing that the Stevens continued to own a large parcel of land at Thames and Sanford Streets.<sup>6</sup> Land boundaries began to change after 1900 with Edwin Stevens death. He was the grandson of John Stevens III and last Steven’s heir to own the house and shop. The house transitioned into a three-family tenement through 1965, with an ell being built onto the west elevation.<sup>7</sup> An additional building had been added to the property to the east at 3 Sanford Street by 1907, but had been sold off by 1921 reducing the size of the lot by half. <sup>8</sup> The house saw its return to a single-family dwelling in 1965 after a major restoration in 1965.<sup>9</sup>

The main façade shows vertical stone block foundation and is the only remaining part of the house that was owned by John Stevens.<sup>10</sup> At one point, the Stevens used marble slabs to shore up the foundation.<sup>11</sup> It shows two basement windows, one to each side of the central door

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<sup>4</sup> See 1758 and 1777 maps in Appendix C, Figures Twelve and Thirteen.

<sup>5</sup> “John Stevens, jun.” *Newport Mercury*. (Newport, R.I.) May 3, 1773.

<sup>6</sup> Land Evidence of Newport, R.I. Deed Book 24, p. 530-531. January 8, 1844.

<sup>7</sup> “Historic Property Data Sheet, Rhode Island Statewide Survey.” (Newport, R.I.) Newport Historical Society. June 1960s.

<sup>8</sup> Richards, L.J. *Atlas of the City of Newport and Towns of Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island*. Scale not given. Springfield: L.J. Richards & Co. Publishing, 1907; Sanborn Map Company. *Atlas of Newport, Jamestown, Middletown, and Portsmouth Rhode Island*. Scale not given. New York: Sanborn Co., 1921.

<sup>9</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Deed Book Volume 213, Page 4.

<sup>10</sup> “Historic Property Data Sheet, Rhode Island Statewide Survey.”

<sup>11</sup> Benson, Esther Fisher. “The History of the John Stevens Shop.” *Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society*. 112 (October 1963): 28.

way. The entryway lies in the center bay with one double sash window a story above. Three reddish stone stairs lead to the cream colored paneled doorway that is recessed one stair width into the main elevation. The entryway has a centrally placed paneled door with three rectangular sidelights flanking the upper half of the entryway on both sides. The entablature is unpedimented and simple, with plain cornice and decorative brackets beneath. The brackets in the entablature are the most decorative external detail to be found on the building. To the right and left of the doorway are one double-hung sash window per bay for a total of four windows, while the second story is completed with one double-hung window per bay for a total of five windows. These windows are placed symmetrically amongst the clapboard siding. The roof is side-gabled with black-grey shingle and undecorated eave that hangs slightly past the façade. The roof was recently reframed and shingled in April of 1997.<sup>12</sup> Two paired interior chimneys peak out from above on the east side of the roof.

The south elevation shows an irregular cut slate stone foundation that mirrors the south elevation with one basement window. It has two double-hung windows symmetrically placed on the first and second stories, with a centrally placed smaller double-hung window within the half story of the side-gabled roof. This elevation along with the north and east are all grey wood shingle siding. Prior to restoration work completed in 1965, the house had clapboard siding on all four elevations.<sup>13</sup> The east elevation is broken up by the ell, which projects from the east side of the elevation and spans two bays along Sanford Street. Before the 1965 restoration work, the east elevation contained a “dilapidated ell” that housed one of the tenement spaces. Noticeable on an 1881 Sanborn map, it shows that east of the frame partition is a two-story wing, but unlike

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<sup>12</sup>#479, Thames St. (P-17, L-303), Building Permits Office of Newport, R.I. April 16, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Photo P5657, Courtesy Newport Historical Society through <http://newportalri.org/items/show/11125>)

the current ell, the wing spans the width of the rear elevation.<sup>14</sup> A brick terrace was added as part of the 1965 restorations and lays south of the ell.<sup>15</sup> Three double-hung windows are symmetrically placed on the first floor. The second floor has only one window in the bay closest to the ell. The ell has one double-hung window per story. The ell also appears to have a doorway that faces the south elevation with covered entryway. The paired interior chimneys are visible and are within the main frame and eastern slope of the roof. The west chimney is twice the size of the east chimney though both are rectangular and brick composition. The north elevation mirrors the south elevation except for the ell and one window in the second story. There is one additional window on the first story of the ell, making for three windows total on the first story. The second story has two double-hung windows, however the window closest to the ell is smaller. The smaller window is eight-over-eight and mirrors the two windows that are seen in the upper half story in the side-gabled roof. Though a colonial home built mainly after 1758, modern amenities including electrical outlets and baseboard heating were added during the restoration to help make the home more attractive in 1965.<sup>16</sup>

The windows are twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash, except for the three areas called out earlier where they are eight-over-eight. The panes are held together with wide shallow muntins. The window sill and lintel are wood and are painted forest green in all occurrences. They are simple with no decoration. They have very simple entablature that is not much wider

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<sup>14</sup> Building Permit Office of Newport, R.I. 30 Thames St. (P-17, L-303) Muriel Rogers Case (C. W. Wharton, Jr.) January 22, 1965; Photo P5687, "Man Working on Exterior of House." Newport Historical Society, Gladys Database. <http://newport.pastperfect-online.com/32053cgi/mweb.exe?request=image&hex=P5687.JPG>; Sanborn Co. *Insurance Maps of Newport*. "Digital Sanborn Maps." May 1881; "Historic Property Data Sheet, Rhode Island Statewide Survey." See Appendix C, Figure Sixteen.

<sup>15</sup> "100 See Restoration Work in Historic Stevens House," *The Newport Daily News*, May 10, 1965.

<sup>16</sup> Guinness, Desmond and Julius Trousdale Sadler, Jr. *Newport Preserv'd Architecture of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*. New York: The Viking Press, 1982, p. 127; "100 See Restoration Work in Historic Stevens House," *The Newport Daily News*, May 10, 1965.

than the window sill and has a simple frieze. On the main elevation and east elevation, the second story windows are aligned directly against the roofline.

### **Thirty Thames Street through History**

#### **John Steven's House 1705 through 1900**

The land at the current address of 30 Thames Street, Newport, Rhode Island has strong ties to the Stevens' Family of Newport. The land that lies southwest of Thames and Sanford Streets was granted to the first John Stevens on December 7, 1705 when he moved to Newport from Boston, M.A.<sup>17</sup> Stevens had been advised that there was a need for stonecutters in Newport and quickly filled the void. As Newport was growing into a popular trade destination in the colonies, Stevens was commissioned to build foundations for new homes and other masonry work like laying hearths.<sup>18</sup> The combination of masonry work and stonecutting helped the Stevens' business to grow as he worked out of his backyard on the corner of Thames and Sanford Streets.

John Steven's son inherited the family business after his father's death in 1736.<sup>19</sup> Having trained under his father, his brother William and he continued with masonry work and stonecutting. John Stevens II, carved many prominent stones in Newport though he labeled himself a "bricklayer."<sup>20</sup> He produced many chimneys and foundations with artisanal expertise while being able to carve a wide range of imagery in his stones.<sup>21</sup> From 1735 through 1743 Stevens contributed to many influential buildings in the city including the Redwood library and

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<sup>17</sup> "Two Centuries in One Family."

<sup>18</sup> Garman, James C. "The Stone Carvers Business: Three Centuries of Craft Tradition at The John Stevens Shop." (Newport: Salve Regina University) Newport Historical Society, 5.

<sup>19</sup> "Will of John Stevens." Stevens Folder, Newport Historical Society. 1724.

<sup>20</sup> "Few of the people..." <Is that the article title? *The Newport Daily News*, February 13, 1961.

<sup>21</sup> Garman, 6.

Touro Synagogue.<sup>22</sup> The family continued to work from sheds in their backyards and the house at the current address of 30 Thames is the oldest building attributed to the Stevens, though it first appears on a map in 1777.<sup>23</sup> With the land being in possession of the Stevens from 1705, it is most likely that they had a dwelling house on the property earlier than 1777.

The third John Stevens was born in 1753 and took over the business at age twenty-five when his father passed in 1778.<sup>24</sup> John Stevens III was interested in self-improvement and the enlightenment which could be seen in his stone carving. He took pride in being an artist rather than an artisan as he made stonecutting the principle work of the shop.<sup>25</sup> He signed all his stones, “John Stevens junr.” showing that the stones he cut for others were considered pieces of art he wanted attributed to his reputation and artistic ability.<sup>26</sup> Stevens built the shop at its current location of 29 Thames Street and worked there with his son Philip and friend John Bull.<sup>27</sup>

John Stevens III used the wealth of his father to buy property that he would rent out. Even with his real estate investments, changing the business from masonry and stonecutting to only stonecutting caused Stevens to live near bankruptcy most of his life.<sup>28</sup> It is unclear if Stevens lived at the John Stevens house during this time, though the property was left to him in Stevens II’s will with two rooms to be used by his mother.<sup>29</sup> His funeral was held in “his late residence on Thames Street” so he did reside in one of the Stevens properties on upper Thames.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Benson, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Blaskowitz, Charles and Will. Faden. A Plan of the Town of Newport. September 1, 1777. Roger Williams University Architectural Library, Bristol. Arch Map.

<sup>24</sup> Benson, 27.

<sup>25</sup> Garman, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Benson, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 29; Garman, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Probate Book Volume 1, Page 405.

<sup>30</sup> “Died.” *Newport Mercury*. Newport. March 15, 1817.



Upon his death in 1817, his wife Mary became administrator of his estate in 1817.<sup>31</sup> However by 1825, Mary was removed as administer and Christopher E. Robbins became administrator through the Probate Court.<sup>32</sup> His personal estate was worth only \$54.50 in July of 1825, down from \$129.33 when it was assessed in 1817.<sup>33</sup> Much of Stevens estate was sold at auction through Robbins administration and John's son James Stevens purchased the property on April 13, 1827.<sup>34</sup>

From 1827 through 1859 the property title transfers between James Stevens and Sarah Sherman three times. James Stevens was a civil engineer and surveyor and may have lived in the property, then known as 224 Thames Street, from 1827 to around 1840. Little is known about Sarah Sherman except she was a map printer, so it is possible James and Sarah knew each other through their trades.<sup>35</sup> Sarah is listed as having one son and is beneath James in an 1840 census showing that they may have lived in the same building or close to each other.<sup>36</sup> By 1856 James was living at 38 Prospect Hill.<sup>37</sup>

James' ownership of the house was tumultuous as he appears to have lived close to bankruptcy like his father. James sold the house to Sarah Sherman in 1835 but buys it back in March 6, 1836. On April 2, 1836, James took out an ad in *The Newport Mercury* asking those who owed him bills to pay half what was due and he would forgive the rest to make money

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<sup>31</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Probate Book Volume 5, Page 372.

<sup>32</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Probate Book Volume 6, Page 55.

<sup>33</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Probate Book Volume 5, Page 372; Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Probate Book Volume 7, Page 67.

<sup>34</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Deed Book Volume 16, Page 497.

<sup>35</sup> "30 Thames Street." From Architectural Heritage of Newport Workbook." Newport: Newport Historical Society.

<sup>36</sup> Year: 1840; Census Place: Newport, Newport, Rhode Island; Roll: 504; Page: 164; Image: 341; Family History Library Film: 0022260.

<sup>37</sup> Ancestry.com, *U.S. Directories, 1822-1995*. [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA,: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. 2011.

before he moved out of state.<sup>38</sup> He must not have made much money as he continued to try and sell the house. In January of 1841, he tried selling the property through the local newspaper. In May of 1842, the house was due to be sold by the city collector's office due to owning \$690 in taxes.<sup>39</sup> No change in title occurs however and James takes out multiple ads in *The Newport Mercury* in 1843 still trying to sell the house.<sup>40</sup> The house is granted back to Sarah Sherman in January of 1844 and remains in her possession until January 8, 1846 when it transfers back to James.<sup>41</sup> The transfer describes stipulations for Sarah to pay James \$1,125.00 by one year from the date of the deed and that the house is due to be sold at auction if she does not pay the debt in time.<sup>42</sup> The transfer of property back to James is listed as complete on July 31, 1847 and he released her of the land as it transferred back into his ownership.<sup>43</sup>

The home houses a stonecutter again when it is granted to Edwin Stevens in 1859.<sup>44</sup> Edwin Stevens was the son of Philip Stevens and grandson of John Stevens III. He and his brother Lysander Stevens ran the shop after Philip Stevens passed in 1866.<sup>45</sup> Edwin lived in the John Stevens House as noted in multiple city directories as 12 Thames Street, and changing to 28 Thames Street in 1883.<sup>46</sup> In October of 1884, he went to the Committee on Gas and Lamps to request a street lamp for the corner of Sanford St.<sup>47</sup> He took pride in his business and estate at upper Thames and wanted to make the streets safer. Edwin was a stone carver but also a very skilled sculptor. He was known as the "best stone carver in this part of the country" after carving

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<sup>38</sup> "True Jackson Currency! Specie Payment!!!" *The Newport Mercury*. April 2, 1836.

<sup>39</sup> "Collector's SALE of Real Estate." *Newport Mercury*. May 28, 1842.

<sup>40</sup> One example is "For Sale." *The Newport Mercury*. May 20, 1843.

<sup>41</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Deed Book Volume 25, Page 541-542.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 541-542.

<sup>43</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Deed Book Volume 26, Page 565.

<sup>44</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Deed Book Volume 34, Page 449-451.

<sup>45</sup> Benson, 31.

<sup>46</sup> Sampson, Davenport and Co. *The Newport Directory 1883*. (Newport: Sampson, Davenport & Co.) 1883, 185; Ward, A.J. *Boyd's Newport City Directory 1878-1879*. (Newport: A. Boyd) 1878, 150.

<sup>47</sup> "The petition of A. M. Sloucon," *Newport Mercury*, October, 11 1884.

a bust of Shakespeare out of marble.<sup>48</sup> Yet little much more is known about Edwin and his ownership of the shop. The shop was run as “P. Stevens’ Sons” under Edwin and he was the last Stevens to own the business.<sup>49</sup> The Stevens ownership of the shop and of the dwelling at its current address of 30 Thames Street ended with Edwin’s death on July 1, 1900.<sup>50</sup>

### **Navy and Laborer Tenement House**

Upon Edwin’s death in 1900, the house transitioned into a tenement boarding house.<sup>51</sup> Newport directories listed many different types of workers boarding at the house through the 1960s including tailors, a painter, torpedo station workers, machinists, coal workers, and even a chauffeur. Many residents did not stay longer than a year or two, yet others spent upwards of fifteen years at the house. This was characteristic of Newport’s downtown at the time while well-off socialites were building summer cottages off Bellevue Avenue. Upper Thames was a working-class neighborhood with a variety of residents. The John Stevens house rented out three different living spaces with none of the owners taking up residence at the home during this time.

Brothers Benjamin and Harry Crowell of Newport took up residence at 30 Thames Street in the 1940s. Both registered for the draft on April 27, 1942.<sup>52</sup> At the time Harry was living at 25 Bridge Street while Benjamin was living at 30 Thames Street and working at the Torpedo Station. He listed Gertrude Mahoney of the same address as the witness to his address.<sup>53</sup> Harry

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<sup>48</sup> No Title Newspaper article. Newport Historical Society: Stevens File.

<sup>49</sup> Benson, 31. See Appendix B, Figure Eight.

<sup>50</sup> Sampson, Davenport and Co. *The Newport Directory 1901*. (Newport: Sampson, Davenport & Co.) 1901, 221.

<sup>51</sup> Though directory records were not able to be identified between 1901 and 1920, the house passed through several owners at this time, none who were identified as living at 30 Thames St. Sources: Multiple *The Newport Directory*, Providence: Sampson, Murdock, & Co., 1901-1921.

<sup>52</sup> The National Archives at St. Louis; St. Louis, Missouri; *Draft Registration Cards for Fourth Registration for Rhode Island, 04/27/1942 - 04/27/1942*; NAI Number: 2555453; Record Group Title: *Records of the Selective Service System*; Record Group Number: 147.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

eventually moved to 30 Thames Street and died there by heart attack on February 3, 1959.<sup>54</sup> He was a retired machinist and had been living with his sister Florence and her nephew Joseph at the time. Florence was the widow of an ordinance worker at the Torpedo Station located on Goat Island in Newport Harbor. It was common for Navy workers to rent living spaces in downtown Newport and 30 Thames is an example of that.

The fifties saw many unpleasant incidents at the house or to its residents. While unoccupied in 1955, eleven windows were smashed by a young boy and girl causing the pipes to freeze over.<sup>55</sup> This incident illustrates the reputation that downtown Newport had at the time of being a place of degeneracy. Lillie Bell Croom lived in the house from 1956 through 1957. She was the wife of Steward Millard Croom who worked for the United States Navy.<sup>56</sup> Newport during this time was known as a drunken sailor town and many fights were attributed to the Navy's presence downtown on a night out. One incident happened to Lillie Bell when she was thirty years old. She walked into the Seamen's Lunch one evening and was punched in the face.<sup>57</sup> She died young at thirty-one after spending twelve days in the Newport Hospital unrelated to the fight. The house saw some trouble at this time as well. A naval worker living at the house in 1957, Hilda Jones, experienced a fire in her living room due to an overflowing oil heater.<sup>58</sup> She was not living in the house the next year.

The house continued to house various workers and tenants into the sixties. In 1958, Milton C. and Mary Massey began residing at 30 Thames Street. Millard was a truck driver for the Dugan Bros. Some unfortunate events occurred for the tenants beginning on January 8, 1960.

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<sup>54</sup> "Harry E. Crowell, Retired Machinist," *The Newport Daily News*, February 3, 1959.

<sup>55</sup> "Eleven Windows Smashed; Two Juveniles Held," *The Newport Daily News*, December 19, 1955.

<sup>56</sup> "Mrs. Millard Croom," *The Newport Daily News*, May 20, 1957.

<sup>57</sup> "Fined for Hitting Woman," *The Newport Daily News*, May 21, 1956.

<sup>58</sup> "Oil Heater Fire Damages Home," *The Newport Daily News*, October 4, 1957.

On this day, Mary Massey's car that was parking outside of 30 Thames Street was struck when Calvin Haynes of the Naval Base fell asleep while driving.<sup>59</sup> Police believe he had been drinking. Her husband Milton Massey later caused an accident on South Baptist Street when he hit another vehicle from behind, causing damage to a total of three other cars.<sup>60</sup> The stories continue to paint the picture that downtown Newport but not the safest part of the city.

Another resident, Bernice L. Greene, was arrested for being rowdy with friends from the destroyer Beatty in the Crown Bar and Grille on Broadway in May of 1961.<sup>61</sup> Bernice was the twenty-one year old daughter of Arthur A. Greene, a janitor at the YMCA who also had served in the Armed Services.<sup>62</sup> She was arraigned later in February of 1962 for a similar charge of reveling on West Broadway where she was the only one to plead guilty out of the four people charged.<sup>63</sup> Another tenement at this time, Alfred P. Shemo had his hubcaps returned to him in August of 1962 after they were recovered by Middletown police when they arrested four men.<sup>64</sup> With much turnover at the house, it is no surprise that the house's time as a tenement was about to come to an end. The owner of the Philip Stevens House which neighbored the property to the south, purchased the house on December 31, 1961.<sup>65</sup>

### **Restoration and the Present**

Urban redevelopment via historic preservation was gaining momentum in the early sixties and the Preservation Society of Newport County was at the forefront early on. The

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<sup>59</sup> "Car Smashes Piazza As Motorist Dozes," *The Newport Daily News*, January 8, 1960.

<sup>60</sup> "Driver is Injured in Rear-End Crash," *The Newport Daily News*, September 28, 1961.

<sup>61</sup> "Newporter's Bail Ordered Forfeited," *The Newport Daily News*, May 20, 1961.

<sup>62</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S., Social Security Applications, and Claims Index, 1936-2007* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015. Original data: Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936-2007.

<sup>63</sup> "Tipsy Driving Charge Denied," *The Newport Daily News*, February 3, 1962.

<sup>64</sup> "Two Hubcaps Stolen...", *The Newport Daily News*, August 17, 1962.

<sup>65</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI, Deed Book Volume 207, Page 477

organization supported private efforts to restore old colonial houses in the city, though were unable to take on a full neighborhood plan.<sup>66</sup> Under Muriel Rogers Case's ownership, restrictions were added to the house. The restrictions stated, "The exterior of the dwelling house located on said granted premises shall be restored and preserved in a manner consistent with its original colonial architecture. [And] that said premises shall be used for one single family dwelling house and for no other purpose."<sup>67</sup> The restrictions are first mentioned in a deed granting the property to the Preservation Society of Newport in December of 1964, but are listed to have been added on December 31, 1963.<sup>68</sup>

The Preservation Society of Newport County owned the home for less than a month, giving the property to private owners for the cost of legal fees.<sup>69</sup> The new owner Charles W. Wharton, Jr. and Mary Wharton most likely took on the cost of restoring the house and were granted a building permit on January 22, 1965 for extensive restorations.<sup>70</sup> During this time a "dilapidated ell" was removed from the east elevation and most of the house was restored. Only the façade remained true to the house pre-restoration, though the restoration work was colonial in style.<sup>71</sup> The work was done in collaboration with Operation Clapboard.

Operation Clapboard was formed in 1963 by homeowners who wanted to save the many colonial houses in Newport.<sup>72</sup> They purchased houses by using the money raised from selling stocks and then reselling the houses to owners who had an interest in restoration. The organization helped the new home owners navigate and make educated decisions in regards to

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<sup>66</sup> "Historic Preservation Via Redevelopment." *Newport Daily News*. Newport, R.I. October 27, 1962.

<sup>67</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Deed Book Volume 213, Page 4.

<sup>68</sup> Land Evidence Office, City of Newport, RI Deed Book Volume 213, Page 4.

<sup>69</sup> "Historic Property Data Sheet, Rhode Island Statewide Survey."

<sup>70</sup> Building Permit Office of Newport, R.I. 30 Thames St. (P-17, L-303) Muriel Rogers Case (C. W. Wharton, Jr.) January 22, 1965

<sup>71</sup> "Historic Property Data Sheet, Rhode Island Statewide Survey."

<sup>72</sup> "Art Association Shows Photos of Colonial House Restorations," *The Newport Daily News*, January 10, 1969.

how to restore their property. Though only in operation a few years, they saved over forty colonial houses.<sup>73</sup> The lead organizer of Operation Clapboard was Esther Fisher Benson, whose husband, John Benson, took over the John Stevens Shop at 29 Thames Street a few years after Edwin Steven's death in 1900.<sup>74</sup> The shop remains in the Benson family to this day under the name "The John Stevens Shop."

The significance of the John Stevens House is first brought to light around this time with the creation of the Point Association. An article in *The Newport Daily News* talks about the history of "the old house at 30 Thames St."<sup>75</sup> It traced the lineage of the Stevens' Shop and explained why they were so influential for their stone carving and masonry work in early Newport. Owners Charles W. and Mary Wharton had one hundred people visit the property in May 1965 to learn what a successful restoration looks like.<sup>76</sup> They used their restoration to show the public that one could restore a colonial house and keep colonial elements while blending in modern amenities to create a comfortable living environment. The Preservation Society then publicized and hosted a tour of the property, along with other houses on June 26, 1965.<sup>77</sup> Some of these houses were recently restored, while others were still undergoing restorations. The restorations were made possible by private owners, Operation Clapboard, and the Preservation Society of Newport County who supported historic preservation and helped show citizens of Newport why it was important.

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<sup>73</sup> Roos, Pieter N., "Beneath the Asphalt Shingles," Newport Restoration Foundation.  
[https://www.newportrestoration.org/writable/files/Books/pieters\\_essay.pdf](https://www.newportrestoration.org/writable/files/Books/pieters_essay.pdf)

<sup>74</sup> Hall, Elton W., "The John Stevens Shop: Three Hundred Years of Stonecutting in Newport," *The Chronicle*, 58.4, p.145-146.

<sup>75</sup> "Few of the people...", *The Newport Daily News*, February 13, 1961.

<sup>76</sup> "100 See Restoration Work in Historic Stevens House," *The Newport Daily News*, May 10, 1965.

<sup>77</sup> "Preservation Society Tour to Include Private Homes," *The Newport Daily News*, June 10, 1965.

The John Stevens House continued through the twentieth Century as a single-family dwelling; Muriel Rogers Case residing to the south in the Philip Stevens house. With a smaller Navy presence and the opening of the Newport Bridge on June 28, 1969, Newport's downtown transitioned into a tourist destination.<sup>78</sup> Though redevelopment of Newport's downtown and wharves saw the destruction of many buildings, houses outside of the area were saved and helped show visitors Newport's colonial past. The John Stevens House stands at the corner of Thames and Sanford Streets as an example of early Newport colonial architecture, but also an example of how a building adapts to its environment and time period as exhibited in the early nineteenth century. It represents a house that was seen worthy of preserving as historic preservation was just about to become a field with the passing of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The John Stevens House was able to survive beyond its early owners and continues to attribute to the colonial streetscape of Newport, Rhode Island.

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<sup>78</sup> "Claiborne Pell Newport Bridge." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claiborne\\_Pell\\_Newport\\_Bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claiborne_Pell_Newport_Bridge).



## Appendix A

### Current Photographs of Property – By Allison Bacon

**Figure One** – General View



**Figure Two – Façade**



**Figure Three- Perspective**



**Figure Four – Front Entrance**



**Figure Five – Exterior Detail**



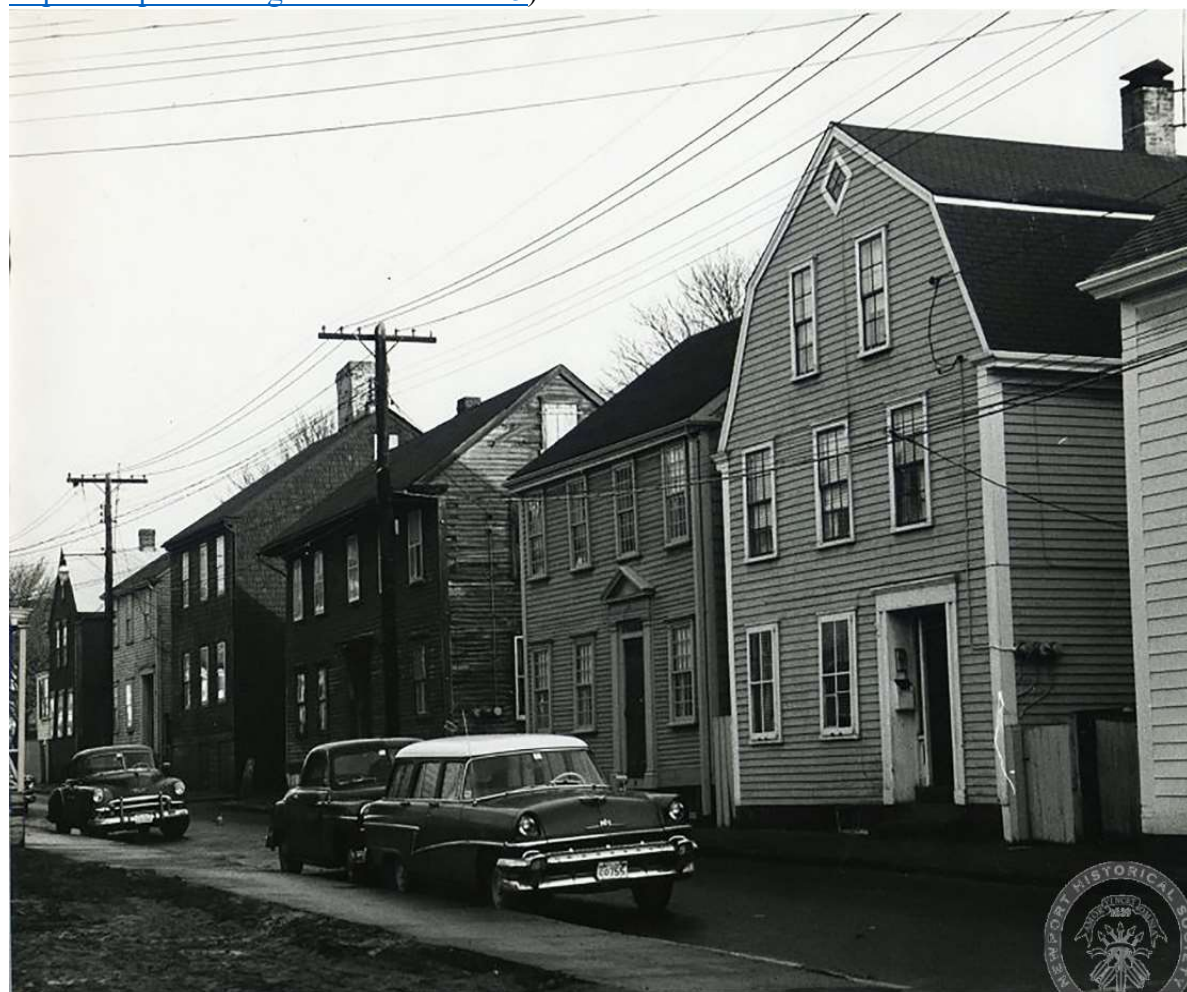


## Appendix B

### Additional Figures

**Figure Six** - The John Stevens House, third building from the right, is shown in this unmarked, undated photo. The decaying clapboard on the west elevation shows the building before its “extensive” restoration in early 1965.

(Photo P5657, Courtesy Newport Historical Society through <http://newportalri.org/items/show/11125>)



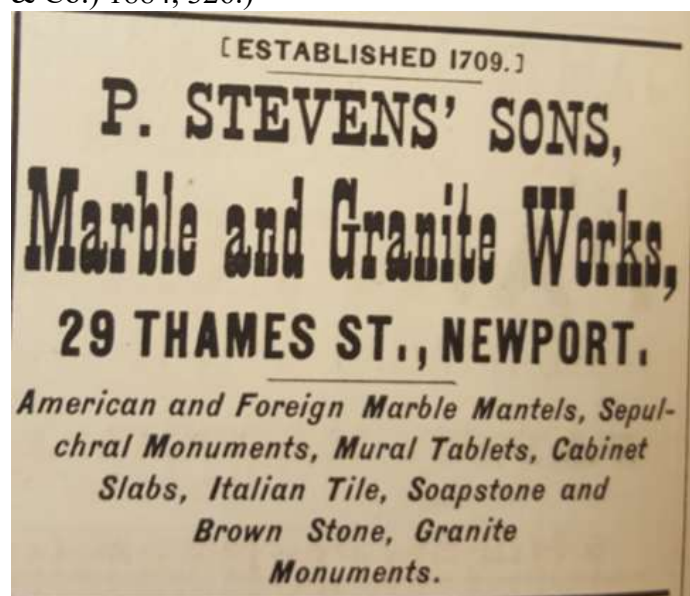
**Figure Seven** - The John Stevens House pictured after its restorations in this 1975 photograph. (Heintzelman, Patricia, "North Baptist north from Bridge Street," National Register of Historic Places Property Photograph Form, October 1975.

<http://npgallery.nps.gov/nrhp/GetAsset?assetID=de2064dd-057a-43f4-b74e-9206c12adf35>)

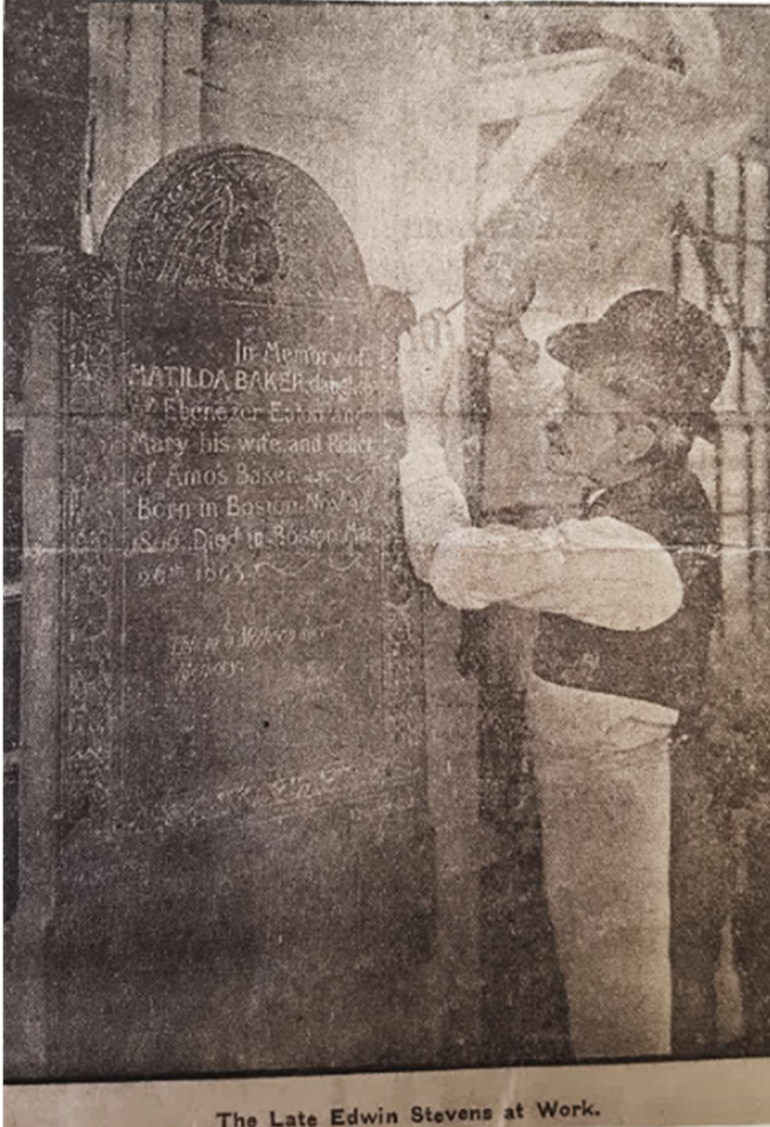


**Figure Eight-** Ad for P. Stevens' Sons in a 1884 Newport City Directory.

(Sampson, Davenport and Co. The Newport Directory 1883. (Newport: Sampson, Davenport & Co.) 1884, 326.)



**Figure Nine** – Edwin Stevens as pictured in newspaper article of unknown origin. (“Two Centuries in One Family.” Unknown Newspaper in “Thames Street to Washington Street, Architectural Heritage of Newport Workbook.” Newport: Newport Historical Society.)



The Late Edwin Stevens at Work.

## Appendix C

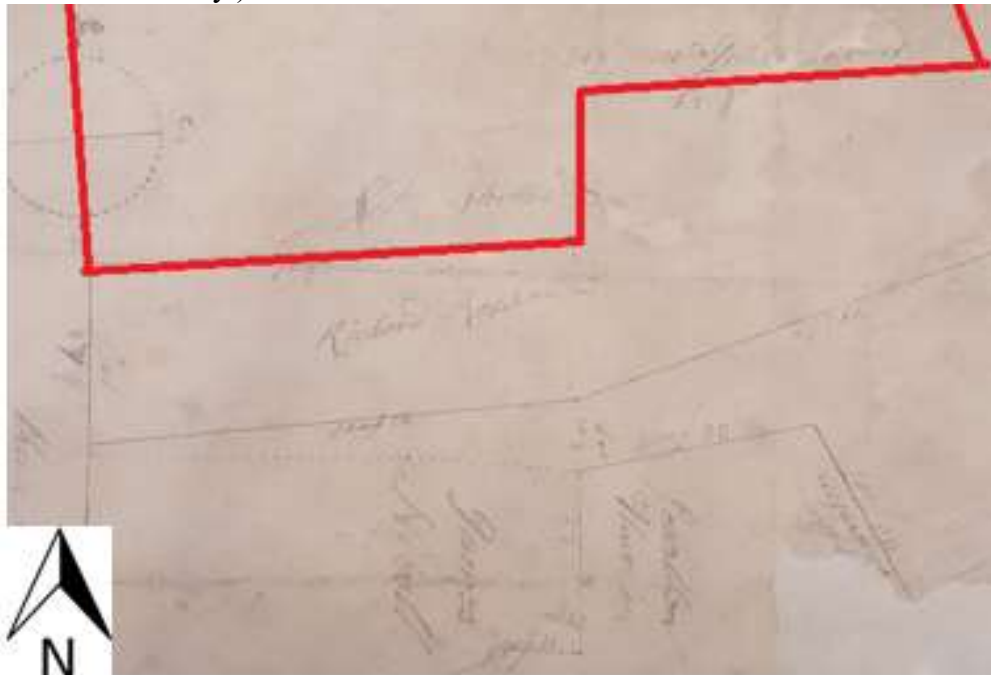
### Building Evolution of House and Property

**Figure Ten** – Current 30 Thames Street



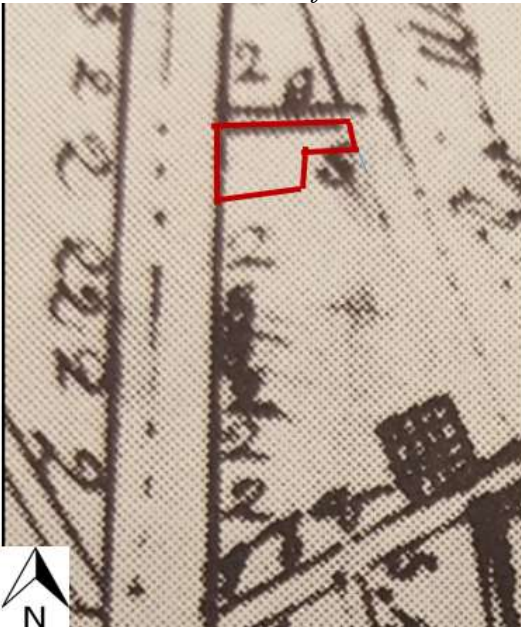


**Figure Eleven** – 1745 (City of Newport, R.I. Survey Map Plat Records. Book 1, 85. Newport Historical Society.)



- Building does not exist on land as of 1745.
- John Stevens is shown owning all the land north of Richard Rosea's land.
- Thames Street is to the west.

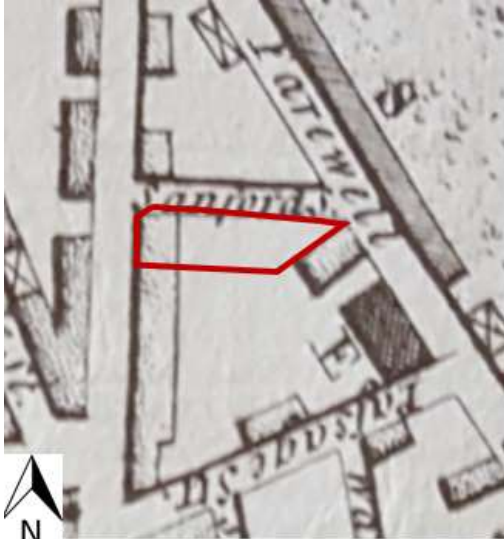
**Figure Twelve** – 1758 (Guinness, Desmond and Julius Trousdale Sadler, Jr. *Newport Preserv'd Architecture of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*. New York: The Viking Press, 1982, 127.)



- Building does not exist as it is not drawn out on map.  
Shop exists near east land boundary. It is not clear if this shop is part of Steven's plot or not.

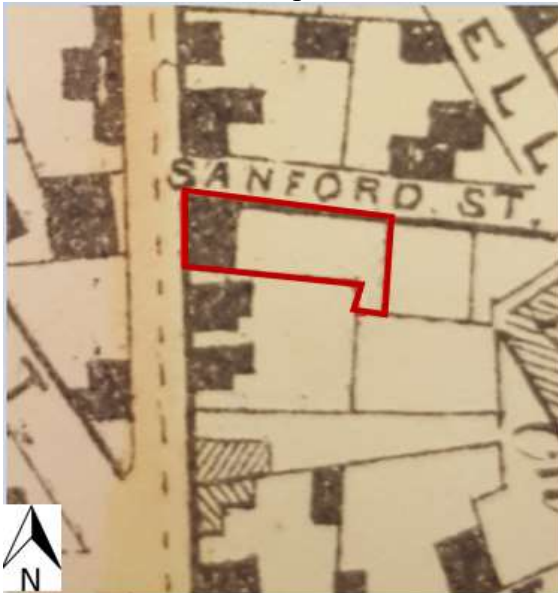


**Figure Thirteen** – 1777 (Blaskowitz, Charles and Will. Faden. *A Plan of the Town of Newport*. September 1, 1777. Roger Williams University Architectural Library, Bristol. Arch Map.)



- This map shows that the land is in an urban part of Newport.
- A building is now present on the property, indicating that present 30 Thames Street was built between 1758 and 1777.
- The footprint of the building is not delineated; it is depicted as part of one long block of buildings along Thames Street, indicating that the property was part of a densely built neighborhood. A building is now present, however it is shown as a long block to show how densely built together.

**Figure Fourteen** – 1870 (Beers, D.G., J.H. Goodhue and H.B. Parsell. *Atlas of the State of Rhode Island*. Philadelphia: D.G. Beers & Co., 1987, plat 4.)



- The plat extends east halfway along the width of Sanford St.
- The plat extends slightly more south on the southeast tip.
- The building appears to have no outbuildings and no additions.

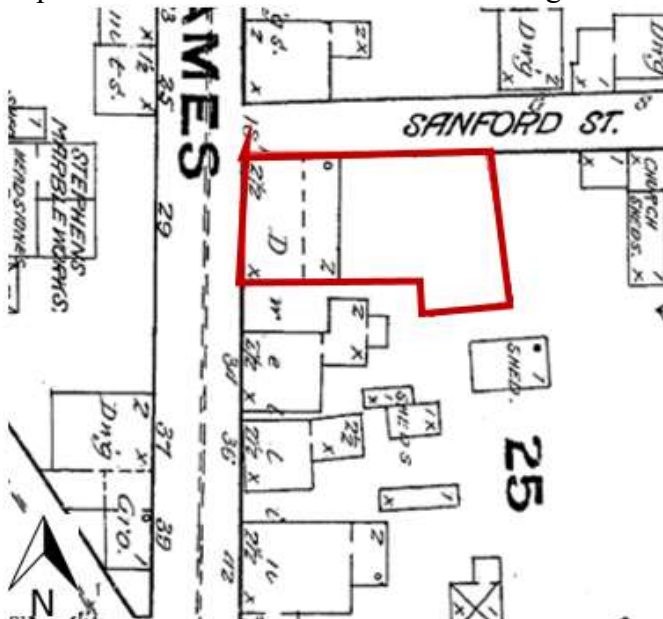
**Figure Fifteen** – 1876 (Hopkins, G.M. *City Atlas of Newport Rhode Island*. Scale not given. Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, C.E. Publishing, 1876.)



- Building owner is Edwin Stevens.
- Southeastern section of the plat has extended to the west as the land that is to the south owned by William Covell has been adjusted as well.
- House is frame construction.
- Address is 12 Thames St.

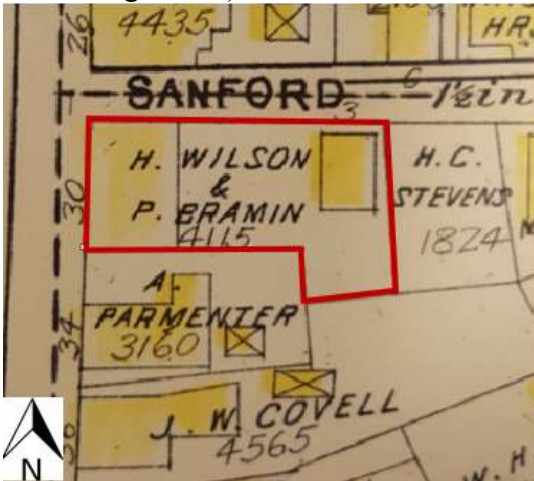
**Figure Sixteen** – 1881 (Sanborn Co. *Insurance Maps of Newport*.

<http://sanborn.umi.com.rwulib.idm.oclc.org/sanborn/image> (Accessed Sept. 16, 2016)



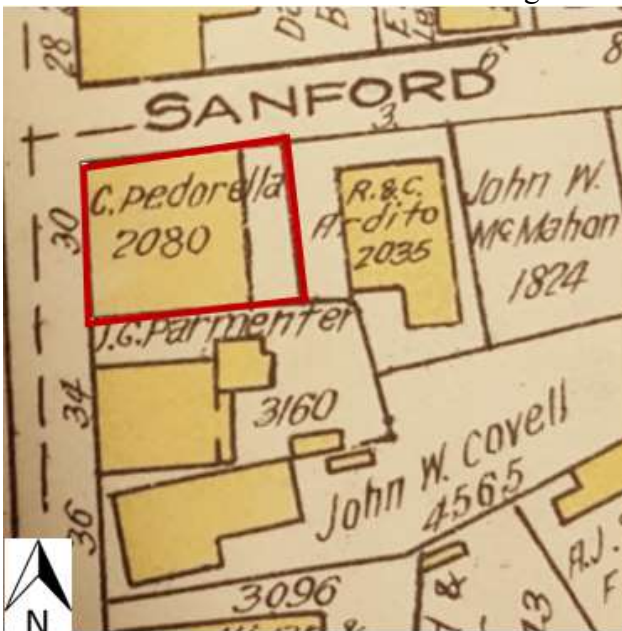
- Building is a dwelling with two stories and a shingle roof.
- The dashed line indicates a frame partition.
- The easterly side of the dwelling has a slate on tin roof.

**Figure Seventeen** – 1907 (Richards, L.J. Atlas of the City of Newport and Towns of Middletown and Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Scale not given. Springfield: L.J. Richards & Co. Publishing, 1907.)



- Address appears as 30 Thames St.
- Building is made of wood.
- The owners of the building are H. Wilson and P. Bramin.
- A second wood building has been built on land to the east at 3 Sanford St.

**Figure Eighteen** – 1921 (Sanborn Map Company. Atlas of Newport, Jamestown, Middletown, and Portsmouth Rhode Island. Scale not given. New York: Sanborn Co., 1921.)



- Building owner is C. Pedorella.
- Plat has been divided almost directly in half from north to south.
- The building to the east at 3 Sanford Street is now owned by R. & C. Ardito.

## Appendix D

### Chain of Title

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Connor H. Dowd; Mary McCall Dowd	Glenn E and Catherine Dawson	11/10/2003

**Description**

- The Dowd's mention they convey all buildings and "improvements."
- Property is westerly by Thames St., northerly on Sanford St., easterly by land of Sophy Martin and southerly by land of Muriel Rogers Case.
- It is known as Lot 303 on Plat 17 of the tax Assessor's Plats in Newport.
- It is commonly known as 30 Thames St.

**Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 1418, Page 264

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Connor H Dowd	Connor H Dowd and Mary McCall	02/28/2002

**Description**

- Property boundary description has not changed.
- Deed is adding Mary McCall Dowd to ownership of the property.

**Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 1124, Page 90

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Virginia C and Robert J Depasqua	Connor H Dowd	12/15/1998

**Description**

- Property boundary description differs on east, as land is now owned by Robert S. Wolfskehl, III.
- Deed mentions the property is subject to restrictions from a deed involving the Preservation Society of Newport to Charles W. Wharton, Jr.
- The restrictive deed is in Volume 213, P. 7 of the City of Newport Land Evidence Records.

**Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 837, Page 260

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Michelle DePasqua	Virginia C. and Robert J. Depasqua	12/1/1998

**Description**

- Michelle is giving her 31% property rights over to the current owners Virginia and Robert.
- Virginia and Robert are now “tenants in entirety,” which means each owner has an equal and undivided interest in the property.
- The southern boundary is referred to as Southwesterly now.
- The easterly boundary is described as the land of Sophy G. Martin, which is interesting because fifteen days later it has a different land owner on that side, but then changes back to Sophy Martin. It must be the same property because the other three boundaries remain the same, as does the Lot number of 303.
- This deed refers to the Preservation Society deed to Charles W. Wharton, Jr. as well.

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#### **Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 837, Page 258

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<b>Grantor</b>	<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Jim D. Rountree, Laurie L. Rountree	Michelle E. Depasqua, Robert J. Depasqua Virginia C. Depasqua	1/24/1997

#### **Description**

- Deed grants Michelle 31% interest, Robert 34.5% percent interest and Virginia 34.5% percent interest as “tenants in common.” This means that each owner owns a share of the property.
- This deed continues to refer to the restrictions from the Preservation Society.

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#### **Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 752, Page 123

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<b>Grantor</b>	<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Mary A. Shepard	Jim D. Rountree, Laurie L. Rountree	8/24/1995

#### **Description**

- Property boundaries remain the same: westerly on Thames St., northerly on Sanford St., easterly on land of Sophy G. Martin, and southwesterly on land of Muriel Rogers Case.
- This deed does not call out the Preservation Society restrictions.

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#### **Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 693, Page 247

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<b>Grantor</b>	<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Joan Sherman	Mary A. Shepard	9/25/1987

#### **Description**

- Easterly boundary has changed to be the land of Caroline Ardito, Life-tenant.

- This deed mentions the Preservation Society restrictions and names the date of the restrictions as January 6, 1965.

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 401, Page 70

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Edward S. Winsor; Jean Winsor	Joan Sherman	9/17/1985

**Description**


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- Boundary descriptions have not changed from September 25, 1987.
- Deed mentions the Preservation Society restrictions.

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 346, Page 52

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Charles W. Wharton Jr, Mary Wharton	Edward S. Winsor, Jean Winsor	2/27/1967

**Description**


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- Edward and Jean are receiving the property as tenants in the entirety.
- Property boundary description has not changed.
- They receive the same premises conveyed to the grantors through the Preservation Society.
- “The premises are subject to the following restrictions and conditions:
  - The exterior of the dwelling house located on said granted premises shall be restored and preserved in a manner consistent with its original colonial architecture.
  - That said premises shall be used for one single-family dwelling house and for no other purpose.
  - That said restrictions and uses shall be construed as covenants running with the land.”

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 219, Page 281

Grantor	Grantee	Date
The Preservation Society of Newport	Charles W. Wharton Jr, Mary Wharton	1/6/1965

**Description**


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- Muriel Rogers Case, who owns land to the southwest, granted this land to the Preservation Society.
- Restrictions are described again.
- Katherine Warren represented the Preservation Society as its president and Wilfred A. Brady as its treasurer.

**Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 213, Page 7-8

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Muriel Rogers Case	Preservation Society of Newport	12/21/1964
<b>Description</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Restrictions to the land are described for the first time.</li><li>• Restrictions were added December 31, 1963.</li></ul>		

**Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 213, Page 4

Grantor	Grantee	Date
William Sacrey, Sr.; Margaret Sacrey	Muriel Rogers Case	12/31/1961
<b>Description</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Land to the southwest is owned by Esther Fisher Benson.</li><li>• Land described as “being the 2<sup>nd</sup> parcel described in deed from Victor L. Pedorella to these Grantors...”</li><li>• This deed does not mention restrictions.</li></ul>		

**Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 207, Page 477

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Victor L. Pedorella, Julia M. Pedorella	William Sacrey Sr, Margaret Sacrey	12/15/1951
<b>Description</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grantees are receiving two parcels of land.</li><li>• First parcel is by Third St and Marsh St.</li><li>• Second parcel is northerly on Sanford St, easterly on land of Rafaele Ardito, southerly by land of the heirs of Carol D. Baker and Majel Parmenter, and westerly by Thames St.</li></ul>		

**Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 177, Page 241

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Concetta Pedorella	Victor L. Pedorella; Julia M. Pedorella	6/2/1939
<b>Description</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This is the last will and testament of Concetta Pedorella.</li></ul>		



- She gives to her son Victor Pedorella and her daughter Julia Pedorella in equal share, as joint tenants, all of her property and estate.
- Victor is to be the Executor of the will.

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 144, Page 292

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Andrew Copassaki	Concetta Pedorella	10/21/1912

**Description**

- Boundary description is more specific: northerly on Sanford 53.2 ft., easterly on land of Packer Braman and Harry Wilson 39.6 ft., southerly on land of John W. Covell 53 ft., and westerly on Thames St by 39 ft.
- Land was formally of Packer Braman to the east.

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 97, Page 162

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Packer Braman Harry Wilson	Andrew Copassaki	6/10/1911

**Description**

- Land to the east is owned by the granters.
- Emiline Braman and Caroline Wilson, wives of the grantors, both also call out that they quitclaim their property rights to Andrew Copassaki.

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 94, Page 228

Grantor	Grantee	Date
J. Truman Burdick (Edwin Stevens)	Packer Braman Harry Wilson	12/29/1900

**Description**

- Easterly boundary is on the land of the late Williams Stevens.
- Southerly boundary is on the land of the late William K. Covell and land of Eliza P. Palmer.
- Described as well as the land of the late Edwin Stevens, that was left to J. Truman Burdick in Edwin's will.

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 75, Page 174

Grantor	Grantee	Date
James Stevens	Edwin Stevens	2/24/1859

**Description**



- The deed describes “buildings” on the land.
- Easterly boundary is on land of William Stevens.
- Southerly boundary is on lands of William K. Covell and Philip Stevens.
- It also conveys “both the stone lot and the homestead lot.”
- James’ wife, Sarah Stevens, quitclaims her right to the land to Edwin.

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#### **Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 34, Page 449-451

<b>Grantor</b>	<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Sarah Sherman Lace Pinfler	James Stevens	7/31/1847
<b>Description</b>		

- Boundary description starts the same.
- West boundary is described as 38.5 feet, including both the stone lot and the homestead lot with the dwelling home thereon.
- This is the final deed that her debt has been paid and James is to take the land.

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#### **Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 26, Page 565

<b>Grantor</b>	<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Date</b>
Sarah Sherman Lace Pinfler	James Stevens	1/20/1846
<b>Description</b>		

- This deed describes that Sarah is to pay James \$1,125.00 by one year from the date of the deed.
- Sara appoints James her attorney with “full power of substitution and revocation for herself and in her place and stead, that is the note shall become due and unpaid, that they may sell at public auction.”
- Must give fifteen days public notice through ad in Newport newspaper.
- James Stevens is described as Civil Engineer.
- Boundary lines do not change.
- There is a paragraph written perpendicular to the main text by James Stevens that the note has been paid, and he will release her of the land.

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#### **Deed Book**

Deed Book Volume 25, Page 541-542

<b>Grantor</b>	<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Date</b>
James Stevens	Sarah Sherman	1/8/1844
<b>Description</b>		

- James Stevens describes himself as a Civil Engineer.

- Land is same boundaries but described as two lots: the easternmost lot called the stone lot and the western part called the Homestead estate with dwelling house thereon standing.
- The stone lot is free of incumbrance except for James' wife's right of dower, but the western part with dwelling house are mortgaged to John Sterne for security.
- Also said western part with dwelling house is mortgaged to Jonathan T. Almy Esq., Merchant of Newport, for Security.

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 24, Page 530-531

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Sarah Sherman	James Stevens	3/29/1836
<b>Description</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land is described as the southwest corner of Sanford Street.</li> <li>• Land starts at the Southwest corner of Sanford Street, then moves south on Thames about thirty-eight feet to the north corner of Philip Stevens land, then moves east along Philip Stevens land to the north to Sanford Street and then back to the starting point.</li> </ul>		

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 21, Page 42-43

Grantor	Grantee	Date
James Stevens	Sarah Sherman	12/12/1835
<b>Description</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boundary is described as the southwest corner of Sanford, and mirrors the previous deed.</li> <li>• There is not much information given about Sarah Sherman.</li> </ul>		

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**Deed Book**


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Deed Book Volume 20, Page 580

Grantor	Grantee	Date
Christopher E Robbins, Administrator de bonis on the estate of John Stevens [III], Stone Cutter Deceased	James Stevens	4/13/1827
<b>Description</b>		

- James received land after his attorney John Stearns was the highest bidder at Public Auction of the estate.
- Boundary description is west on Thames; south on land belonging to Philip, James, and William Stevens; east on the land belonging to the heirs of John Stevens, but was sold to pay taxes; and north on Sanford Street.
- It is a lot of land with dwelling house and other buildings.

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**Deed Book**

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Deed Book Volume 16 Page 497

Will	Date
John Stevens (II)	5/28/1774
Description	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the will of the second John Stevens as he was married to Elizabeth. There were no other related deeds in which John Stevens was the grantee at City Hall. No other wills of John Stevens mentioned land.</li> <li>• He gives his wife Elizabeth Stevens his lot of land that he purchased from Gideon Cornel with dwelling house, a house and lot of land he purchased from Israel Woodward, and two rooms in the north end of the dwelling house he lives in. He also gives her life and improvement of his personal estate, and the service of his slave Zingo for seven years after he dies.</li> <li>• Zingo is to be set free and at liberty after the 7 years of service.</li> <li>• He leaves his dwelling house and lot of land to son John Stevens, reserving the two rooms for his mother.</li> <li>• He also leaves him the two aforementioned lots of land in the Point section, all his working stock, working tools, and wearing apparel.</li> <li>• He gives to his daughter Mary Bisrell the dwelling house and land that he bought from Israel Woodward, to be given to her when his wife should cease to be his widow anymore.</li> <li>• He gives to his grandson, James Bisrell, the same land as his mother, should she die and if Elizabeth Stevens shall cease to be his widow.</li> <li>• When Elizabeth ceases to be his widow, John bequeaths to his son John Stevens and to his daughter Martha Bisrell the dwelling house and land he bought from Gideon Cornel to be split equaling between them.</li> <li>• His wife Elizabeth and son John are to be the Executors of the will.</li> <li>• It is not clear which parcel of land or dwelling refers to the southwest corner of Thames and Sanford Streets.</li> </ul>	

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**Deed Book**

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Probate Book Volume 1, Page 405

## **Appendix E**

### **Architectural Guidebook Summary**

John Stevens House at 30 Thames Street – This symmetrical colonial residence, Georgian in style, is two and one half stories with twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash windows. It has a gable roof with a wide overhanging cornice. Though the main façade is all that remains of the original building, restoration work in 1965 aimed to keep the scale of the house in line with the other colonial home in the area. G.H. Richardson notes that the south end of the house was built in 1709 and the north part in 1750. Additions were added on after 1758. The house was the home of John Stevens, famous stone carver of Newport, R.I. responsible for many stones as well as masonry work in eighteenth century. The house remained in the Stevens family for almost two centuries. Upon the death of the last Stevens heir to own the home, Edwin Stevens, the house transitioned into a three-family tenement from 1900 to 1965. It has now returned to being a single-family dwelling.

## **Appendix F**

### **Integrity and Significance**

Though only the main façade is original to the building, the land that the John Stevens House lies on can be attributed to the original John Stevens, stone cutter and mason of Newport, R.I., as early as 1705. The land at what is currently known as 30 Thames Street was the original location of John Steven's business through the 1770s, where they would conduct their work in sheds behind their houses. The Georgian house blends into the colonial streetscape, giving the feeling that one has travelled back to the eighteenth century. Restoration work was carried out ensuring the scale of the building would maintain the colonial feel of Upper Thames Street. The house stayed within the Stevens family through two centuries and lies across from the stone cutting shop that was erected by John Stevens III. The house was one of the colonial houses saved in the 1960s by Operation Clapboard, and represents historic preservation efforts that were growing in popular support with the passing of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966 and in the face of urban renewal. Without its presence, Upper Thames Street would cease to show Newport's colonial heritage.

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