

# PROVIDENCE Journal

Business

## The Fifth Ward: Where Irish roots run deep in Newport

By Christine Dunn

Journal Staff Writer

Posted Jul 20, 2013 at 1:48 PM

NEWPORT -- The city's St. Patrick's Day Parade, the oldest in the state, begins at City Hall but ends in the Fifth Ward, a traditionally Irish neighborhood just south of the lower Thames Street commercial district.

NEWPORT -- The city's annual St. Patrick's Day Parade, the oldest in the state, begins at City Hall but ends in the Fifth Ward, a traditionally Irish neighborhood just south of the lower Thames Street commercial district.

Located on the southern edge of Newport Harbor, the neighborhood was developed mainly from the 1820s through the Gilded Age (1870 to the turn of the century), when many Irish immigrants came to the city to work as laborers or servants for the moneyed elite in the nearby mansions.

"Newport was Rhode Island's first community to have a substantial Irish population," the state's Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission noted in a report on the Southern Thames historic district. "Although Irish settlers had come to Newport by the mid-eighteenth century, the first significant numbers of Irish immigrants arrived during the 1820s. These early Irish immigrants came to work on the construction of Fort Adams, and many settled in the Southern Thames area -- the built-up portion of town closest to the construction site."

Rhode Island's first Roman Catholic congregation was established in the city in 1828 to serve the growing Irish-Catholic community, the report added. "This parish, originally named St. Joseph's and now St. Mary's, had its church in a

former schoolhouse,” the report said. In the 1840s, a devastating famine in Ireland led to a surge of Irish settlement in the United States.

In 1852, a new Gothic-style church building was dedicated for St. Mary’s, at 12 William St. This historic church is a National Historic Shrine and is famous as being the site of the wedding of President John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Lee Bouvier on Sept. 12, 1953.

In the 1880s, a new St. Joseph’s was established on Broadway, and another Catholic parish, St. Augustin’s Church, was established in the heart of the Fifth Ward in 1911.

The Fifth Ward is a reference to the neighborhood’s former political affiliation, a name that stuck throughout redistricting (the city today has only three wards). The neighborhood is bounded by Wellington and Roseneath avenues, Old Fort Road, Ruggles Avenue, and Dearborn and Spring streets.

The neighborhood also has four parks: waterfront King Park on Wellington Avenue, with its scenic views of Newport Harbor, Spencer Park, Morton Park and Murphy Field.

Throughout the housing crisis, the city has had one of the lowest foreclosure rates in the state, and Newport’s status as a tourist destination has kept housing values relatively high, compared with many other cities and towns in Rhode Island.

Prices of single-family houses listed for sale in the Fifth Ward last week ranged from \$347,000 to \$520,000. A rare 5,663-square-foot house lot on Stockholm Street was priced at \$195,000.

There were also several condominiums for sale, most priced below \$200,000. A one-bedroom, 550-square-foot condo on Stockholm Street was listed at \$185,000.

There were three multifamily properties for sale, all priced in the high \$300,000s.