

The Irish in Newport

The first Irish immigrants to Newport, in the mid 1600's, came as the result of English policies and Cromwellian brutality toward Ireland.

The 1700's saw the arrival of the noted philosopher, educator Dean George Berkeley, and the involvement of many Irish in the Revolutionary War. Documentation is very incomplete, but we know the names of Fitzgerald, Burke, Morris and Flanagan fought in that war.

1778 saw the arrival of the French to Aquidneck Island to support America, with the Irish Regiment under Count Dillon, some of whose ranks stayed behind.

The next wave of immigration occurred in the 1820's as the result of the difficult economic times in Ireland, and the first of the potato crop failures in 1818 and 1822. Of course, the huge potato crop failures of the 1840's drove thousands to come to America.

In the 1800's many skilled Irish worked in such diverse fields as the Portsmouth coal mines, the gardens and houses of the Newport Mansions, and the construction of Fort Adams.

Through the 1800's and 1900's the Irish established themselves as a rich, diverse group that has contributed to the fabric of this area. The names of O'Connell, McCormick, Walsh, Horgan, Butler, Galvin, O'Neill are familiar, and since 1895 there have been eleven (11) mayors of Newport of Irish descent.

Walking Tour of Irish Newport

Tour 1: Fifth Ward (Self-guided)



The Museum of Newport Irish History
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Newport, RI 02840

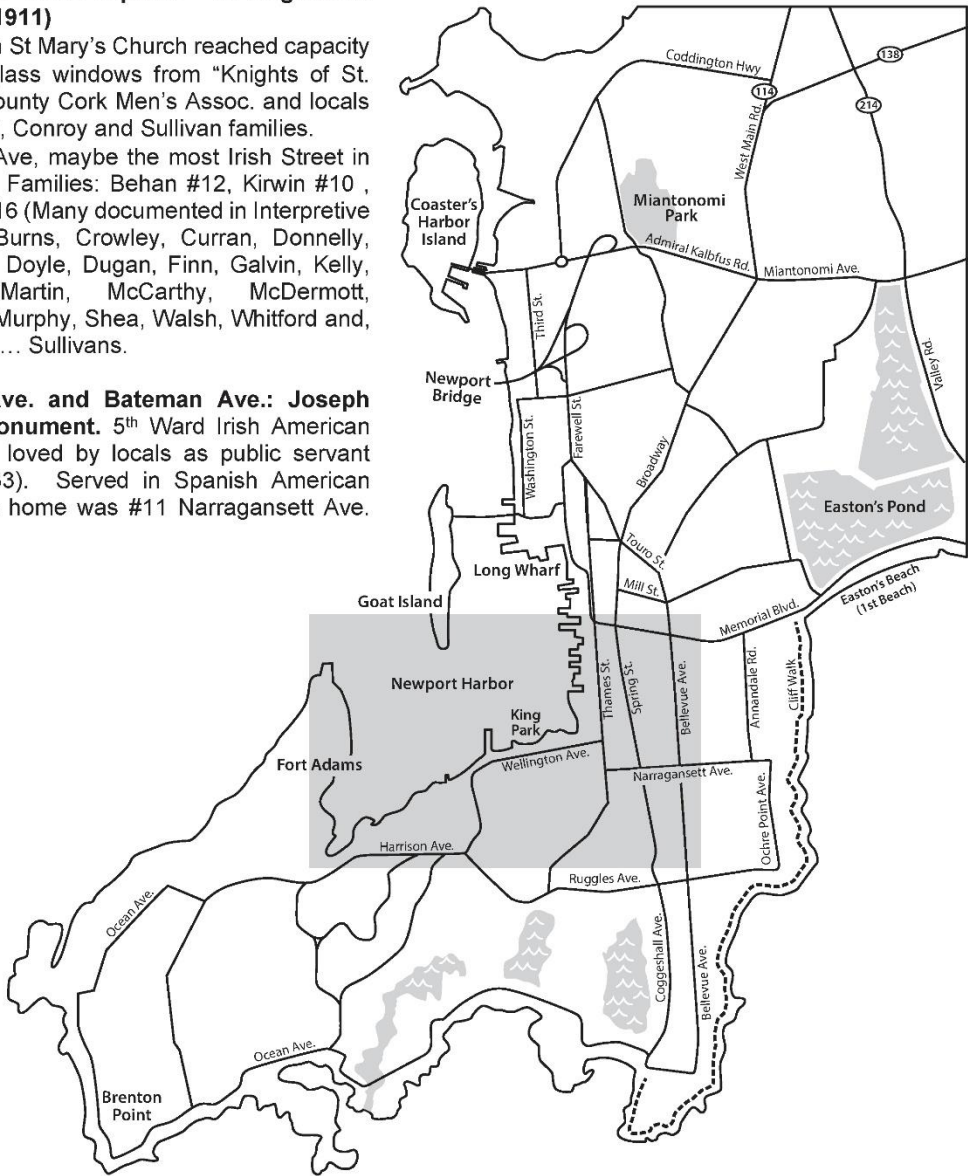
newportirishhistory.org
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Open May—October and by appointment

4. 8 Morton Ave.: Former Home to Irish American “Big Eddie” Sullivan. Many said, “Biggest man I’ve ever seen”! Police Chief in 1940s-1950s. Imposing figure for any law-breaker!

5. ONE Fifth Ward Square: St Augustin’s Church (1911)
• Built when St Mary’s Church reached capacity
• Stained glass windows from “Knights of St. Finbar, County Cork Men’s Assoc. and locals like Lynch, Conroy and Sullivan families.
• Harrison Ave, maybe the most Irish Street in America! Families: Behan #12, Kirwin #10, Lehane #16 (Many documented in Interpretive Center), Burns, Crowley, Curran, Donnelly, Donovan, Doyle, Dugan, Finn, Galvin, Kelly, Lynch, Martin, McCarthy, McDermott, McNulty, Murphy, Shea, Walsh, Whitford and, of course.... Sullivans.

6. Carroll Ave. and Bateman Ave.: Joseph Martin Monument. 5th Ward Irish American Alderman loved by locals as public servant (1874-1933). Served in Spanish American War. His home was #11 Narragansett Ave. (Stop#7)

7. 11 Narragansett Ave.: Former home of Alderman Joseph Martin. (Monument at 5th Ward Square). He was revered by all in the 5th Ward for his community service.



1. “The” Fifth Ward: Newport’s best known Irish-American neighborhood - known by all in Newport and “out of towners”.
• Abolished as a ward during the 1930s redistricting.
• Once the largest ward: Stretched from Bellevue Avenue and Perry Street South and West to the Atlantic Ocean, Narragansett Bay and Newport Harbor then East to Pope Street extended line. (Encompassed most of Bellevue Avenue and all of Ocean Drive and Thames Street South of Pope Street.
• Fifth Ward Square dedicated in 2006. St Augustin’s Church located at ONE Fifth Ward square. (Note sign in front)
• Branding: “Fifth Ward Liquors”. Desirable “5th Ward Home” for sale, 5th Ward Vacation Homes for rent. “Fifth Ward Bar” at our sister

- city’s White House hotel in Kinsale, Ireland.
• Once home to 19th century Irish as they populated Thames Street, slowly moving south along Thames from mid-1800s to early 1900s. Many were “help” at Bellevue Avenue “cottages” circa 1900.

2. 662 Thames St., Corner of Carey St.: Mike Maguire’s Store - Irish grocer and closest thing to a supermarket in the early 1900s. Later became dry-cleaner and bakery and now houses pottery shop/art studio.

3. 1 Potter St.: Dennis E. Collins House, former High Sheriff of Newport County and President of Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) Division #1 Newport Division named in his honor).

8. 18 Narragansett Ave.: Former home of (Judge) Florence Kerins Murray. Raised here as a child. First female member of RI Supreme Court. Courthouse (Washington Sq.) named for her. Her family hailed from Lisdoonvarna, County Clare, home of the annual Irish match-making festival.

9. Carey St. School (1896) (adjacent to #19 on the right): Land purchased from (not donated to Newport) the Carey Estate. Henry R. Astor Carey, son of John Jacob Astor. “Victorian Gingerbread” located at 523 Spring St cottage was Carey Estate Gardener’s cottage.

10. 36 Hammond St.: Eamon de Valera, President of Ireland, visited Hanora Hickey here during one of his visits.

11. 2 Wellington Ave.: Hibernian Hall: Ancient Order Hibernians (AOH) Dennis E. Collins Div#1: (*Hibernia* is Classical Latin name for Ireland)
• Ancient Order established in Ireland in the 16th century to protect clergy from Cromwellian persecution.
• Irish Catholic fraternity founded on principles of Friendship, Unity, Christian Charity.
• Established in 1836 in both New York City, NY and Leadville, PA (due to Irish working in the coal mines) as a fraternity to aid immigrants seeking shelter and jobs.
• Established 1876 in Newport.
• The original current building was founded 1884 as Grace Memorial Chapel (Congregational) around the corner on Thames St. and then moved to present location 1886. It became Presbyterian church 1888 and then purchased by AOH in 1906. AOH now 650+ members, 2nd largest in U.S. (behind Pearl River, NY).
• Dennis E. Collins was a WWII Veteran, Chief Warrant Officer USN, Past President Newport AOH, and appointed High Sheriff by RI Governor. He resided at 1 Potter St. (stop # 3) across from Interpretive Center and is buried St. Columba’s Cemetery. Middletown.

12. King Park: General compte de Rochambeau Monument:

- Postulated that the assimilation of the Irish into this area was eased because the majority of French forces were also Catholic and many Newport Irish served as ship repair labor and military volunteers onboard French ships. Several fleet sailors buried at Trinity Church Anglican cemetery, Spring St.
- French fleet were heroes to Newport and US. The fleet departed Newport and aided in defeating the British at Yorktown.
- Newport was base to French expeditionary force of 6,000 who helped secure our liberty.

13. Fort Adams - viewed from Rochambeau Monument at King Park: Largest and most sophisticated star-shaped coastal fortification in US.
• Construction part of post War of 1812 building program under President Monroe.
• Built over 33-year period (1824-1857).
• More than 400 Irish laborers (pre- and post-famine) resided in shanty towns outside the fort’s gates during construction period. Paid \$1.00-\$1.72 per day. Volunteer Irish labor also built the foundation St. Mary’s (Our Lady of the Isle) Church on days off.
• Fort served as Army caisson base through WWII - never fired shot in anger.
• We recommend tour by docent Steve Marino, a Fort expert and also a member of the Museum of Newport Irish History Board.

#14 Below is a half mile /10 minute walk North along Thames St.

14. Thames Street Textile Mills: Four mills located on the harbor side of Thames St. provided employment for Irish men, women and children during the 1830s and 1840s. Two of the mills remain: the Steam Mill (1831) at 449 Thames St. currently houses the International Yacht Restoration School and the Perry Mill (1835) at 337 Thames St. currently houses a hotel and shops at the corner of America’s Cup Ave.. A renowned stonemason, Alexander MacGregor, built this beautiful building.