

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name: Horsehead/Marbella

other name/site number: _____

2. Location

street & number: 240 Highland Drive

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Jamestown vicinity: N/A

state: RI county: Newport code: 005 zip code: 02835

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: _____

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	_____	buildings
<u>1</u>	_____	sites
<u>3</u>	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>6</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Property name Horsehead/Marbella, Newport County, Jamestown, RI

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

___ See continuation sheet.

Fred R. Williams

27 Apr 1999

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

___ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
- ___ determined eligible for the
National Register
- ___ See continuation sheet.
- ___ determined not eligible for the
National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic:	<u>Domestic</u>	Sub:	<u>Single Dwelling</u>
Current:	<u>Domestic</u>	Sub:	<u>Single Dwelling</u>

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7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation STONE roof WOOD/shingle
walls STONE/WOOD other _____
Shingle

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: National

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, B, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): _____

Areas of Significance: Architecture
Industry
Landscape Architecture
Social History

Period(s) of Significance: 1882-1925 _____

Significant Dates: 1882-84 1889-90 c.1920

Significant Person(s): Wharton, Joseph

Cultural Affiliation: _____

Architect/Builder: A Bevins, C.L.
B Johnston, J.D.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Newport Historical Soc., Jamestown Historical Soc.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 26 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	_____	_____	_____	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

The property encompasses Plat 10, lot 59, of Jamestown Assessor's Plat Map.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

Extent of property historically associated with areas of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Harrison M. Wright, Historian, and Wm McKenzie Woodward, Architectural Historian

Organization: R.I. Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission Date: 3/99

Street & Number: 150 Benefit Street Telephone: 401-222-2678

City or Town: Providence State: RI ZIP: 02903

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Description

An oceanfront property with a substantial Shingle Style summer house and carriage house/barn on twenty-six acres of rolling, rocky grounds, Horsehead occupies a promontory on Conanicut Island's Southwest Point. On the north it is bounded by Highland Drive and two private residences; the rest of the property is surrounded by water: the mouth of the East Passage of Narragansett Bay to the east and south and Mackerel Cove to the west. Both buildings are in excellent condition and look much as they did when they achieved their current form about 1890.

Horsehead's setting is extraordinary, and the summer-house complex and its landscaped site are inextricably linked. With nearly a mile of rocky granite coastline, the property's topography ranges from sea level to almost ninety feet in some spots. Cliffs ranging from twenty to fifty feet in height overlook the water on the east and south. To the west are two coves with small, pebbly beaches. The main house and the carriage house are situated on high ground almost in the middle of the property. The main residence is dramatically sited: it both commands breathtaking views of its surroundings and is itself, in return, an imposing sight from the water or nearby Aquidneck Island. The vegetation of grass, bush, and trees (primarily cedar and oak) on the rolling surface of the land is punctuated by striking granite outcroppings of various sizes.

The seemingly natural landscape underwent significant site improvements when the property was developed in the 1880s. Four retaining walls were built near the water. Extensive filling and leveling occurred around the house and carriage house/barn, which are built into the land with dramatic changes in grade on the west side exposing basement-level walls which extend as retaining walls beyond the structures. To the northwest is a meadow of slightly over two acres. On the west side of the property a flight of over fifty wooden steps runs down to a grassy area just above the south cove beach. Vehicular access to the property from Highland Avenue originally followed two paths, both entered through gates: for guests, a dramatically unfolding spatial sequence along a winding grass driveway to the east above the Southwest Point Cove retaining wall to the house's front door; for service, a paved road that runs directly south to the east of the meadow. Except for paths and the open lawn and a few small gardens near the house complex, scrub growth seems largely unencumbered and must be pruned to maintain both a natural look to the vegetation and the many striking views from the house complex.

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The large house, approximately fifty by ninety feet, is built of random-course granite ashlar on the first story and on the north and south end-gable walls, with wood-shingle roof, dormers, and second story on the west. The particularly animated exterior profile envelops an interior that fills three full stories, a fourth-level attic, and a fifth-level belvedere. The low mass of the first story, open on the south end as a porch with round-arch openings carried on paired columns, crouches below a two-story gable roof, intersected on the east side by four large dormers and giving way to a cross-gable-roof-capped second story on the west. A massive tower intersects the facade wall just south of the front door: semi-octagonal at the first-story level, it fragments into sixteen sides on the upper stories before opening to the elements at its highest level, immediately below a tall, ogee-curved roof, itself almost two stories high. Two red-brick pilastered chimneys rise from the house, a corbeled one at the roof's peak and a simpler one near the northeast corner. The front entrance is set within a broad, somewhat low-slung round-arch opening approximately in the center of the east elevation; the small, recessed porch, paneled in quarter-sawn oak and decorated with a geometric pattern rendered in nail heads, frames narrow, small-pane bull's-eye-glass sidelights and a two-panel double-leaf cherry door with stained-glass windows. At the foot of the door is the phrase "Pax Vobiscum" rendered in tiles set in concrete; a pair of dolphins with intertwined tails is carved in the transom. To the north of the entrance is a one-story oriel window. Windows on the west side's basement story are tripartite, with rose-window centers flanked by sixteen-pane sash; those on the first story's east and south elevations are single-pane with transom; those on the first-story's west elevation are tripartite, with single-pane centers flanked by two-over-one sash; those on the north elevation and the upper stories of the east and south elevation are small-diamond-pane-over-one sash; and those on the west are two-over-one sash.

The interior, little changed since around 1890, retains significant interior spaces on all four levels.

The basement level, above grade on its west side, originally housed the kitchen, still intact but no longer used as such at the north end. Most of the basement space was utilitarian, including a large cellar with some bedrock walls, an underground water tank, and a few service rooms, one containing the original built-in oversize ice box.

~~The main floor is simply laid out. The front door, on the east, leads directly into the main stairhall, flanked by living room on the south, dining room on the north, and enclosed porch, now converted to kitchen on~~

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the west. North of the dining room is a library on the east and a pantry and service stairs on the west. Floors of the principal public rooms here are oak parquet.

The cherry-wainscoted main stairhall, with two small coat closets at its east end, is broad and deep. A massive oak and cherry wood staircase rises at its southwest corner from a carved newel post capped by a stylized pineapple and incorporates a built-in bench at its foot.

The thirty-six-by-eighteen-foot living room, entered through wide pocket doors centered on its north wall, is the house's largest room. It is decorated with mixed woods, including oak and cherry. A massive fireplace, flanked by French doors to the porch, dominates the otherwise simply finished room; its two-story pedimented mantel incorporates a central mirror panel flanked by book shelves. Original glazed tiles, probably English, surround the hearth. At the room's east, a wide, shallow wooden arch, inscribed "Multa Petentibus Multa Desunt," frames the large bay window with built-in seating at the base of the octagonal tower. Symmetrical window and French door lead to the west.

The dining room, entered through double oak doors, has high oak wainscoting. On the east wall are a small bay window and the fireplace, surrounded by tiles similar to those in the living room and bolection molding and capped by a modest mantel shelf. Symmetrical window and French door lead to the west. A broad door on the north wall leads to the study, while a narrow door at the northeast corner leads to the pantry and service stairs.

The library has built-in oak bookshelves on the west wall. The striking blue Arts-and-Crafts wallpaper dates from about the time of the First World War; the old telephone to the carriage house is still on the wall. A door at the north end of the west wall leads to a lavette.

The small pantry to the northwest has its original built-in storage: counters with drawers or cupboards below on the east, north, and south and shelving with sliding glass doors above on east and south. In the northwest corner are the dumbwaiter and a speaking tube to the basement. A door to the north leads to a small closet and to a staircase leading down to the basement and up to the second floor.

~~To the west of the living room entry hall and dining room is a modern kitchen and informal living area. The forty-by-eleven-foot west porch, originally open but enclosed in the early twentieth century, was remodeled~~

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to its current use in 1994-95. The cherry cabinetwork takes its design cues from both the cabinets in the pantry and the paneling in the living room; the floor is fir.

The second floor has a more utilitarian plan and finishes. The main stair ends at an open living hall (long designated the sewing room), which extends toward the west. The plan is structured around a long, north-south hall that runs most of the length of the building and leads to seven bedrooms, five full or partial bathrooms, and two hall closets. In addition to the main hall, bedrooms and bathrooms also communicate by interior doors. The sewing room has low wainscoting and three windows that light the stairs and main stairhall. The master bedroom, largely in the tower near the southeast corner, incorporates a large bay window. The other rooms are simply finished with painted or wallpapered walls. Two of the bathrooms have high wooden wainscoting, and several retain original plumbing fixtures. An oak staircase at the south of the hall leads to the third floor; a linen closet and a back staircase to the third floor are on opposite sides of the hall at the north.

Third floor organization is similar to that of the second floor, with long north-south hall. Here, however, the hall is interrupted at the middle of the house for a central bathroom, installed in the 1920s, with two doors to permit passage from north to south. To the bathroom's south are five bedrooms, including the tower guest bedroom; to the north, one small bedroom, a storage room, the service stair, and a large zinc-lined tank--no longer used--able to hold over 1300 gallons of water.

The final level is the sixteen-sided open deck within the top of the tower. Reached by narrow stairs and a sliding trap door, it provides a 270-degree view of open water, from Newport harbor, Fort Adams, and Castle Hill to the northeast and east, the open ocean and Block Island to the south, Mackerel Cove to the west, and up the West Passage beyond the Jamestown-Verrazzano Bridge to the north. Hanging from the open wooden framing of the dome's interior is a large bell.

The L-plan carriage house embraces a retaining-wall lined courtyard on its northeast side. Like the main house, it has random-course granite ashlar on the first story and the gable ends, wood-shingled upper-story walls and roof and two fully exposed stories on the west elevation. It has a steep roof on its north-south main axis, gabled at the south end, hipped at the north. Extending to the east is a low-slung vehicle-storage shed, partially built into the ground. It has irregular fenestration on both its first and attic stories. On the east wall of the first story is a vehicu-

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lar entrance and smaller pedestrian or equine entrance. On the west wall are two vehicular entrances into the basement level. The dormers on the roof are simple gables, save for the semi-circular-plan hip-roof dormer above the smaller entrance on the roof's east slope and a large eyebrow dormer on the west slope. The most distinguishing characteristic of the carriage house is the octagonal tower which breaks forth from the building mass at the center of the roof's north slope. A pilastered brick chimney rises from the ridge at the building's south end.

The carriage house interior was originally designed to combine living quarters for people, carriage horses, and a few farm animals. The basement, entered from outside on the west, is a single large space with seven brick support posts down the center and interior stone walls alternating with exposed bedrock; its floor is beaten earth and concrete, and it has three original stalls for farm animals. A staircase connects the basement with the upper levels. The main floor is dominated by the large almost-thirty-foot-square open carriage room to the south; it has high wooden wainscoting. Just to the north are lavette, saddle room (now used for storage), stable room, and steep, narrow enclosed staircase to the second floor. The stable room was made into a billiard room probably in the mid-1920s. It has an oak floor and tongue-in-groove wooden walls and ceiling. The second floor, entered from the outside by an exterior staircase on the south, has the original living quarters in its southern section and the old hayloft in its north. The living quarters are somewhat cramped and awkward both because of the slope of the roof and because they were originally subsidiary to the other functions of the building. A narrow central hall has two bedrooms and a bathroom on the west side and a kitchen and two bedrooms on the east. The original hayloft, used later as an artist's studio and then as general living space, occupies the northern third of the second floor. Its walls and its high ceiling are of tongue-in-groove wood.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

3. Photographer: Harrison M. Wright

4. Date: September, 1998

5. Negative filed: RIHP&HC

150 Benefit Street

Providence, RI 02903

(The above information applies to all photographs.)

Photograph Number 1: View south along entrance drive.

Photograph Number 2: View of main house toward southwest overlooking Mackerel Cove.

Photograph Number 3: View of main house toward northwest, with carriage house at lower right.

Photograph Number 4: View of complex toward southeast from meadow.

Photograph Number 5: View of main house toward northeast from bluff.

Photograph Number 6: View toward west of main stair hall, first floor.

Photograph Number 7: View toward southwest of living room.

Photograph Number 8: View toward northeast of dining room with study beyond.

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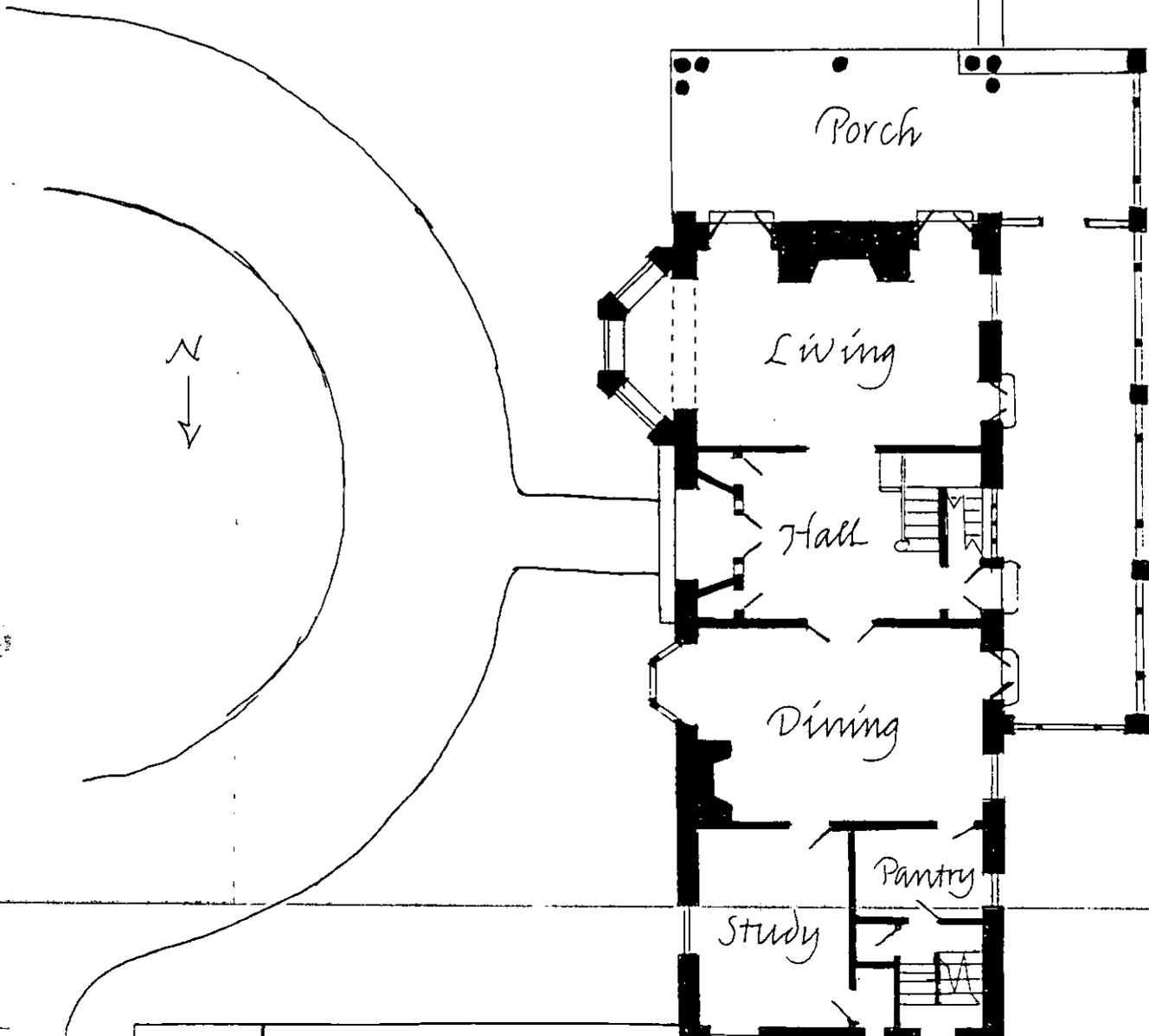
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HORSEHEAD
240 HIGHLAND DRIVE
JAMESTOWN, RI

Sketch Plan - Not to Scale



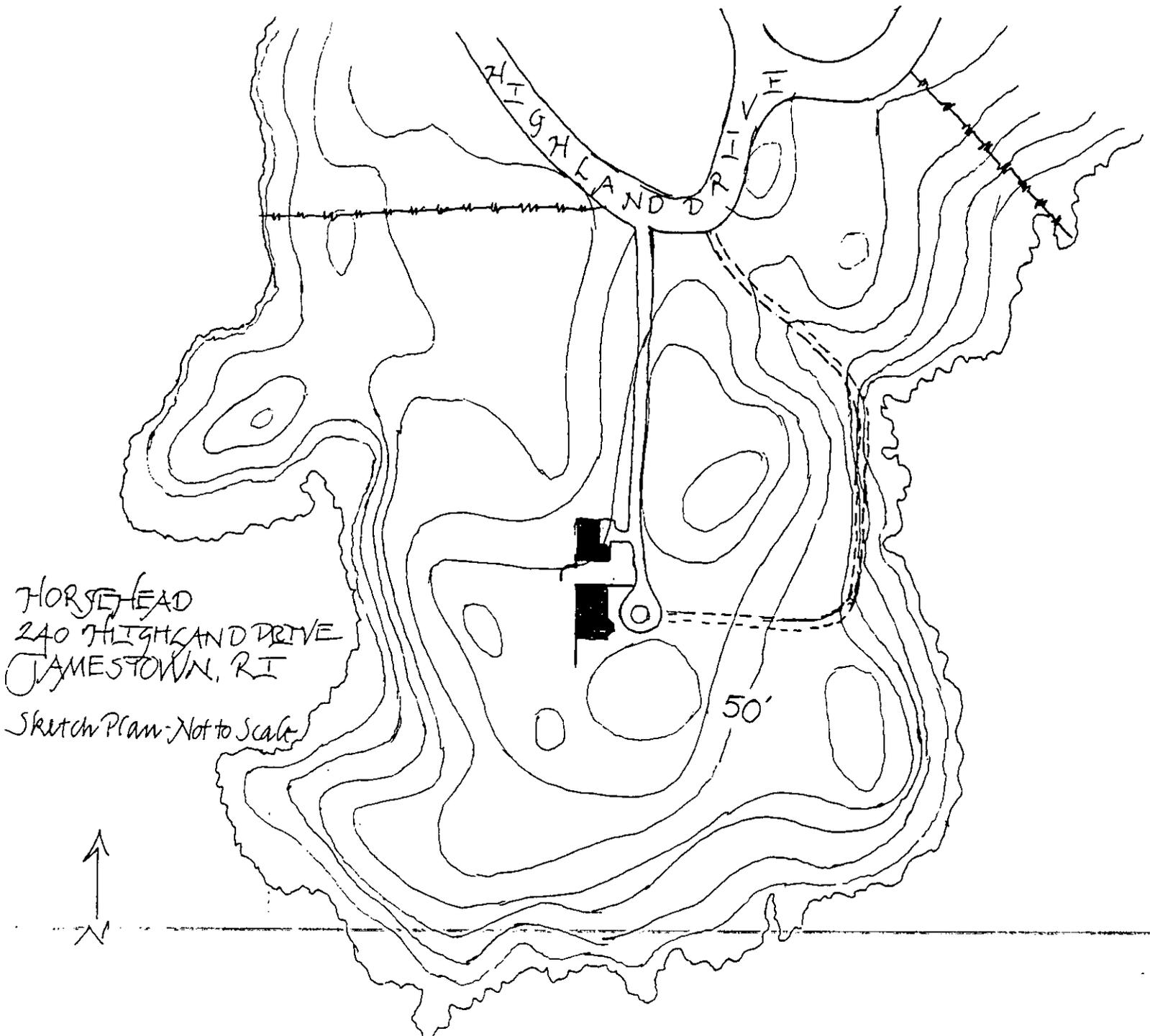
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Significance

Built as the summer residence for a Philadelphia industrialist and his family, the Wharton House (1882-84, 1889-90; Charles L. Bevens, architect; once known as Marbella, now as Horsehead¹) is significant in the history of architecture, landscape architecture, industry, and American society. Architecturally it represents an important stage in the evolution of seaside Shingle Style summer houses. Its landscape is significant both for studiously created naturalism and sequential ordering of space. For industry, it is significant as the summer home of Philadelphia steel magnate and philanthropist Joseph Wharton (1826-1909), who developed the property beginning in 1882 and summered here with his family until his death. Its significance to social history resides in its ability to document Jamestown's beginning development as a quieter, lower key summer alternative to the then-increasingly-showy architecture and leisure activity in Newport, just across the East Passage of Narragansett Bay.

HISTORY

Wharton bought property on Southwest Point in 1882, and site improvements and construction of both main house and carriage house began soon after. The house was habitable but not entirely completed when the family moved in for part of the summer of 1884. As first completed, the house had a simple two-story gable roof—intersected by the tower on the east—that stretched down to shelter first-story public rooms and the porches on the south and west sides. In 1885 Wharton bought adjacent property to the west that provided him with convenient spring water and access to a cove where he could safely moor his boats. He named his house Marbella. In 1889-90 Wharton decided he needed more space for guests and built an addition on the west elevation above the porch; the shingled west wall extended a full two stories above the exposed basement and terminated in a candle-snuffer tower on the southwest corner.

¹This nomination will refer to the property as Horsehead; Wharton himself referred to the property as Horse Head, after one of its most prominent cliffs, as early as June of 1882, but by 1898 the house itself seems to have assumed the name Marbella. Horsehead thus has the virtue of continuity, even if overshadowed for a time by Marbella.

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Horsehead's designer was Charles Lovatt Bevins (1843-1925), an English architect then resident in Jamestown.² No doubt Wharton also had a significant hand in the overall design process, as he did in all his personal projects.³ Contractor John D. Johnston (1849-1928) was probably also involved in the design as well.⁴

Bevins is little known. Standard architectural sources include no references to him, and he is mentioned only in passing in Newport sources of the period. A native of Manchester, England, he came with his wife and children to Boston in 1878 and soon made his way to Jamestown, where he settled in 1882. There he caught the rising tide of the boom in summer cottages and, although he maintained his office in Newport from 1884 until 1903, remained a resident of Jamestown into the 1920s, when he moved to his daughter's house in Newport, where he died. Many of Jamestown's finest summer houses in the 1880s and 1890s were his.⁵ When he undertook Horsehead, Bevins was already working on summer houses for Wharton's

²Newport Mercury, 31 March 1883.

³Primary documentation is scanty. Wharton's letterbooks for this period of his life—unfortunately—are missing. Only one sheet of exterior plans (unsigned) remains for the main residence. See also Anna Wharton Morris, "A Trip Across the Bay," Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society 96 (January 1936): 3-12.

⁴By 1882 the building contractor advertised his ability to provide clients with plans and specifications. Johnston's later work for the Wharton family includes Clingstone, built on an island in the East Passage.

⁵Other remaining commissions by Bevins include houses for Admiral Thomas O. Selfridge, Jr, The Barnacle (1886), 15 Dumpling Drive and Red Top (1889), 185 Walcott Avenue; Mr and Mrs Theophilus Stock, Fowlers Rocks (1892), 340 East Shore Road; Harry Potter (1890), 133 Fort Wetherill Road; General Robert E. Patterson, The Ramparts (1888), 27 Newport Street; David Dixon Porter, Belvedere (1888-89), 36 Walcott Avenue; Daniel Lyman Hazard, Ledgehurst (1887), 89 Walcott Avenue; John P. Green, Anotock (1889), 95 Walcott Avenue; and Charles N. Bailey (1898-99), 105 Walcott Avenue. Bevins also designed the Thorndike Hotel (1889) and St Mark Roman Catholic Church.

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brother, Charles, and for another Philadelphia Quaker, Benjamin Shoemaker; in 1892-93 he designed Harbor Entrance on Bull Point for Wharton's best friend, Isaac Clothier. Of these, only Horsehead remains. Bevins later designed the 1889-90 addition for Horsehead as well as an unrealized addition in the late 1890s.

Johnston, a self-made local builder-architect who later designed and built Newport City Hall and many Newport and Jamestown summer houses, served as general contractor and employed local artisans for the work. Charles Soule managed the carpentry; Frank or Alton Dawley, the masonry; Joseph Mayer, the painting and decorating; and the firm of Joseph & Robert Haire and Patrick Murphy, the plumbing. Although there was a steam ferry from Jamestown to Newport, it landed too far north for the workmen to be able to use it. Instead the workmen sailed daily from Newport to the Dumplings area and then walked over the fields to the construction site.

Following Wharton's death in 1909 his widow, Anna Corbit Lovering Wharton (1830-1914), inherited the property. After her death in 1914, the Whartons' youngest daughter Anna Wharton Morris (Mrs Harrison S., 1868-1957) bought the property from the estate, formally re-named it Horsehead, installed electricity and plumbing, added bookcases in the study, and changed the color of the outside trim. The Morrises spent summers at Horsehead until 1941, when wartime restrictions and Harrison Morris's declining health precluded their return. After Morris's death in 1948 his widow returned to Horsehead each summer through 1952, when her own illnesses made it impossible to continue. Upon her death, Anna Morris's only child, Catharine Morris Wright, an artist and author, inherited Horsehead. After lending it to the British syndicate managing the first post-war America's Cup challenge in 1958, Mrs Wright permitted her children to use it until her death in 1988. The property now belongs to her son, Harrison Morris Wright.

ARCHITECTURE

Horsehead belongs to the class of large, informal, shingled summer cottages that began to develop as an identifiable American residential property type at northeastern seaside resort locations, including nearby Newport, in the 1870s. Intense scholarly activity over the past forty years has chronicled and analyzed their formal development.

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Most American summer houses, which began to emerge as a particular property type after 1840,⁶ constituted principally a wood-frame, wood-clad form of residential architecture. In the 1870s, country-house architecture became heavily influenced by English examples, especially the Queen Anne designs of Richard Norman Shaw. The Americanization of English forms had largely occurred by 1880, and the developments in the 1880s illustrate one of the most inventive periods of American architecture.⁷ How interesting, then, to consider a thoroughly American country house designed by an English architect.⁸

Horsehead is especially interesting for the early applications of signal formal devices that became increasingly common as the 1880s unfolded: the use of masonry lower story, foundation, and integral retaining walls to unite the building and its site and the simplification and abstraction of form, here with a prominent tower and a tightly contained mass.

The shingled summer house—set on a low, inconspicuous foundation and with wood shingles used on most vertical and sloping surfaces—was by 1880 the lingua franca of stylish resorts from Cape May, New Jersey, to Mount Desert, Maine. H. H. Richardson, arguably the most influential architect in the country by 1880, had just completed a number of important masonry public buildings. He then undertook several important domestic commissions in which masonry played a significant, form-giving role to architectural design. The first of these was the Ames Gate Lodge (1880-81), North

⁶Newport's "Kingscote," The Jones-King House (1839 et seq.), Bellevue Avenue at Bowery Street (NHL), is perhaps the oldest house in the country built at a summer resort for seasonal occupation.

⁷Vincent J. Scully, The Shingle Style and the Stick Style, rev. ed. (New Haven, 1971), pp. 88-90.

⁸Knowledge of Bevins's architectural background and training is sketchy. His obituary on 21 December 1925 in the Newport Daily News explains that "...early he developed a decided taste for drawing and painting, and after a thorough schooling traveled extensively in the study of architecture, visiting many of the most important places on the globe." Neither does there seem to be any explanation for his emigration in 1878: did he come to this country with the intent of designing summer cottages?

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Easton, Massachusetts, whose fieldstone first story appears to emerge out of the rock-strewn New England landscape. On a similar note, McKim, Mead & White's contemporary Cyrus McCormick House (1880-82), Richfield Springs, New York, sits atop a stone foundation whose walls extend beyond the enclosed porches into terraces. While other stone-foundation or stone-foundation-and-first-story Shingle Style houses were built in the early 1880s, their emphasis is more on textural differentiation of wall surface, a continuation of the Shavian Queen Anne.

Horsehead establishes a close relationship between building and site found in only a few other houses from this early in the 1880s. Richardson's influence is obvious in Peabody & Stearns's Kraggsyde, the G. N. Black House (ca 1882), Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, where the random-course-ashlar foundation continues the stone outcroppings of the cliff-side setting. William Ralph Emerson began to use rugged masonry foundations in such a site-specific way in 1881 both on Boston's North Shore and Mount Desert: like Kraggsyde, both the Charles Loring House (1881) in Beverly and Thirlstane, Mrs R. B. Scott's House (1881), high on Malden Hill, used rugged stone foundations that appeared to grow out of rock outcroppings.⁹ At Horsehead, the house is built into the side of a hill that drops gently both to the north and west, and random-course-ashlar retaining walls extend the wall planes east and south to create a plateau east and south of the house. Similarly, the carriage house, just north of the main house, continues this relationship, nuzzling into the lower part of this slope on its south and east sides and emerging from it to the north and west. At Horsehead, the intricate topographical relationships between both the house and carriage house and the complex and its site make it visually compelling as well as significant for the sophistication of its spatial planning.

The use of a prominent cylindrical tower as a compositional device came into widespread use in the 1880s¹⁰. Complexity of massing, derived from English examples, had characterized Modern Gothic, Queen Anne, and Shingle Style houses since the early 1870s. That complexity derived,

⁹Thirlstane's stone work, however, ends at the foundation; the principal floors were all clad in wood.

¹⁰Both their use and the increasingly frequent visual and written references to Norman architecture during this decade no doubt reflect the growing number of American students at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and their exposure to French architecture.

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however, largely from the use of complex, irregular rectilinear plans, highly inflected roof forms with complex dormer configurations, and sculptural chimneys. Cylindrical towers prominent in both plan and profile are relatively rare before the early 1880s; they appear only occasionally in the work of Bruce Price (The Craigs [1879-80], Mount Desert), Peabody & Stearns (The Breakers [1878], Newport), and, most conspicuously, in Emerson's Thirlstane (1881). Just about the time that construction began on Horsehead, prominent circular- or polygonal-plan towers began to appear more frequently in the domestic work of Arthur Little and McKim, Mead & White.¹¹ None of these, however, was so commanding as the tower at Horsehead; while other examples incorporate themselves in or subordinate themselves to the overall massing of the building, Horsehead's tower rises far above the roof's ridgeline to become the dominant element in the building's profile. The tower is likely another site-driven design element, intended to evoke the lighthouse image—inspired by the similarly sited Beavertail Light (NR), located just two miles to the southwest.¹²

In the development of the Shingle Style, the containment of architectonic volume within a simple, almost abstract, geometric shape began to occur in the early 1880s. McKim, Mead & White's work certainly moved in this direction, with the increasingly-horizontal building mass largely contained within one sweeping gable roof, suggested tentatively by the Prescott Hall Butler House (1878-80), St James, New York, then more assertively in the McCormick House (1880-82) and finally apotheosized in the William G. Low House (1886-87) in nearby Bristol. Though more vertical than McKim, Mead & White's compositions Horsehead, especially as completed and before the 1890 addition, was one of the most abstract Shingle Style houses built until that time: a massive gable roof accommodating two upper

¹¹Prominent towers play important compositional roles in the firm's casinos at Newport (1879-81), Narragansett (1881-84), and Short Hills, New Jersey (1882-83). Residential essays of the form occur somewhat tentatively in the Isaac Bell (1881-83) and Frances L. Skinner (1882) Houses, both in Newport. The Rhode Island examples would certainly have been known to both Bevins and Wharton.

¹²Not surprisingly lighthouse imagery was found in other seaside resorts at the same time, notably "Grasshead" (1882; Arthur Little, architect), Swampscott, Massachusetts and the E. C. Stedman House (1882-83; E. M. Wheelwright, architect), Newcastle Island, Maine.

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stories above a strictly rectangular building envelope, with the tight massing broken only by the massive tower and a small oriel window on the first story of the east elevation. The clarity of this geometry would appear later in the work of Bruce Price, especially the Tuxedo Park commissions in the mid-1880s, as well as in the early work of Frank Lloyd Wright. But at the time of its design and construction, Horsehead was in the vanguard of this abstractivist approach.

Horsehead is clearly early in its use of close integration of building complex to site, its use of a prominent polygonal or circular tower, and its use of abstract geometric form. What further distinguishes Horsehead is the combination of all three elements in a new, exciting way. In contrast to other similarly conceived houses, it retains an emphatic verticality, a quality attributable both to its design by architect, client, and contractor and to its response to the site. The whole composition, with ruggedly simple forms firmly rooted to the site and yet eminently visible from most directions, demonstrates an architectural vision that is equally strong and subtle.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Horsehead's landscaping was—and still is—one of the most significant features of the property. After considerable thought Wharton decided not to build his house on the edge of the cliff (the location chosen for several of the above-cited seaside shingled houses) where its views of the bay and the ocean would have been direct, obvious, and unobstructed, but to place it farther back, where it would be better protected from storm and would sit more centrally on his large property.

The landscape was considerably altered to accommodate the residential complex and to maximize views, and some of the most dramatic changes occurred on the site of the house and carriage house. Rock was blasted to clear the site for development, and some of the blasted rock—along with rock from elsewhere—was then used in the lower portions of both main house and carriage house and for part of the main driveway's retaining wall. In addition to blasting and filling to create a high, level plateau on which to place the house and carriage house, fill was added among the rocky cliffs for paths and views, and a retaining wall was added to the south, overlooking the ocean. A series of carefully-placed saddles between the rocky outcroppings allowed views of the ocean and the bay even from the first floor of the main house, despite its distance of 300 to over 600 feet from the water. The resulting long perspectives were extremely picturesque, and they depended on the lack of vegetation characteristic of the

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area at that time. (Indeed, much of the history of the property has been a struggle to maintain the historic views, both of the cliffs and of the water, while at the same time allowing for a natural and inevitable growth of vegetation where appropriate.) To the north he separated his twenty-six acres of land behind formidable stone walls.

Other site improvements occurred on the Mackerel Cove side of the property to the west. The southern cove was dredged to create sufficient depth for a long pier for boats. A number of walls (both decorative and functional), some steps in the cliffs here and there to facilitate climbing, and a variety of carefully laid out paths were inserted unobtrusively and naturalistically through the landscape. A small bathing house by the pier, a flight of wooden steps down to the south cove, a windmill to pump water, a boathouse by the north cove, and a grass tennis court to the west of the house completed the landscaping and minor structures.¹³ The property had no formal gardens and few decorative plantings. For the most part it was intended to look as bare and as dramatic as it had before development began.

Horsehead's ordering of space produces a dramatic, sublime sequence, especially that of the main drive, now little used but maintained in its historic appearance. Located on the south side of Highland Avenue, the main gates open onto a grass driveway that curves almost immediately to the east and undulates through a heavily wooded section. Down a hill, the drive reveals Southwest Point Cove in the foreground, the mouth of the East Passage at mid-range, and Aquidneck Island beyond. The road then curves south and climbs the hill both next to and atop the east retaining walls, with water far below to the east, a steeply wooded hill above to the west, and only the sky in view directly ahead to the south. Below the crest of the hill, the road turns right, to the west, to begin the final ascent to the main house, which emerges into sight directly on axis with the road as the water is again revealed to the south. No other country house approach in Rhode Island is so dramatically conceived as Horsehead's, and it is undoubtedly among only a handful on the New England coast—especially in this fine state of preservation.

¹³Of these improvements, only the wooden steps down to the south cove remains.

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INDUSTRY

Horsehead is significant to industry for its association with Joseph Wharton (1826-1909). His summer residence for twenty-five years, it is the remaining property most closely associated with this important Philadelphia industrialist, philanthropist, and founder of the Wharton School of Finance at the University of Pennsylvania.¹⁴

Joseph Wharton (1826-1909) descended from prominent Quaker merchant families of Philadelphia and Newport. His grandfathers, Samuel Rowland Fisher and Charles Wharton, were Philadelphians; his grandmothers, Hannah Rodman and Hannah Redwood, Newporters. His independently wealthy father, William Wharton (1790-1856), primarily concerned himself with Quaker matters and had a role in the Hicksite-Orthodox separation of the 1820s and 1830s. His mother, Deborah Fisher Wharton (1795-1888), a minister in the Society of Friends (Quakers), was involved in various Quaker causes and charities and was one of the founders of Swarthmore College.

Joseph, the fifth of ten children, was privately educated. Particularly interested in chemistry, foreign languages, and business, he established with his brother a white-lead company in 1847. From 1853 to 1863 he managed the Lehigh Zinc Company and produced the first commercially successful spelter in the United States. In 1857 he was one of the founders of a small iron company that in 1861 became the Bethlehem Iron Company and eventually part of Bethlehem Steel. In the 1860s he bought an abandoned nickel mine in Gap, Pennsylvania, and was for a long period the only producer of refined nickel in the country. He developed a pure malleable nickel (1875) that was used, among other applications, in the nickel coinage of the United States and Germany. In public policy he was well known and influential as a supporter of protective tariffs. His philanthropy emphasized education: he was a donor to Swarthmore College and Chairman of its Board of Managers from 1883 to 1907; in 1881 he established the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, the first business school in the United States.

¹⁴Also associated with Wharton is Batsto, in the New Jersey pinelands. In 1873 Wharton purchased what became by 1900 a 150-square-mile tract which included a substantial Federal house, which Wharton remodeled in the Italianate mode and added a 100-foot-high tower.

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SOCIAL HISTORY

Horsehead is significant in the development of the Town of Jamestown and Conanicut Island (the two are coterminous) as a summer resort in the late nineteenth century. Although settled by wealthy families from out of state, like Newport to the east and Narragansett to the west, Jamestown's development was significantly different in character.

Isolated from the mainland to the west until 1940 and from Aquidneck Island to the east until 1969, Conanicut was slower to develop as summer resort than both of its neighbors. Conanicut was a largely undeveloped agricultural island as late as 1870. At this time a small village existed on the island's east shore, fewer than fifty houses stood north of Narragansett Avenue, five houses stood on Beavertail, and only one house, the Cottrell farmhouse, stood south of Hamilton Avenue. The entire island had fewer than 500 residents. The organization of several real-estate-development companies after 1872 and the inauguration of regular ferry service between East Ferry and Newport in 1873 signaled the beginning of the island's transformation into a small-scale summer resort.

In 1875, the Ocean Islands Company acquired the southernmost 265-acre tract of the Cottrell Farm and began selling land overlooking the granite cliffs in and around the island's Dumplings area. By 1882 the marine painter William Trost Richards and Wharton's brother Charles were building summer houses above the cliffs east of Southwest Point and began to sing the area's praises. Richards's assessment of Conanicut as "no place more lovely in all the world" no doubt prompted other Philadelphians to locate in the vicinity. Wharton was fortunate to obtain one of the best sites, Southwest Point, where he began construction in 1883. By 1887 some dozen Philadelphia families occupied summer houses in this vicinity. Only a handful remain today; both the Richards and Charles Wharton Houses have disappeared.

Like other Philadelphia Quakers, the Whartons seem to have found Newport too frivolously social for the proper upbringing of their daughters and sought the quiet isolation of Conanicut for their summer home. The kind of summer life that the Wharton family led was similar to that of their neighbors and is perhaps best reflected in the program of their summer house, which clearly was not designed for large-scale entertainment or for show. There was adequate room for family and friends; but in contrast to many contemporary Newport houses there was no ballroom, concert room, billiards room or other gathering place specifically for the entertainment of large numbers of guests. Even the two most public spaces,

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the living and dining rooms, were comparatively unpretentious and barely able to accommodate more than the house could comfortably sleep. The house was, in fact, exactly what Wharton had intended: a quiet summer home for a wealthy Victorian Quaker family of five, their servants, and occasional guests who came to enjoy the splendid views, quiet solitude, and the gentle company of the house's inhabitants.

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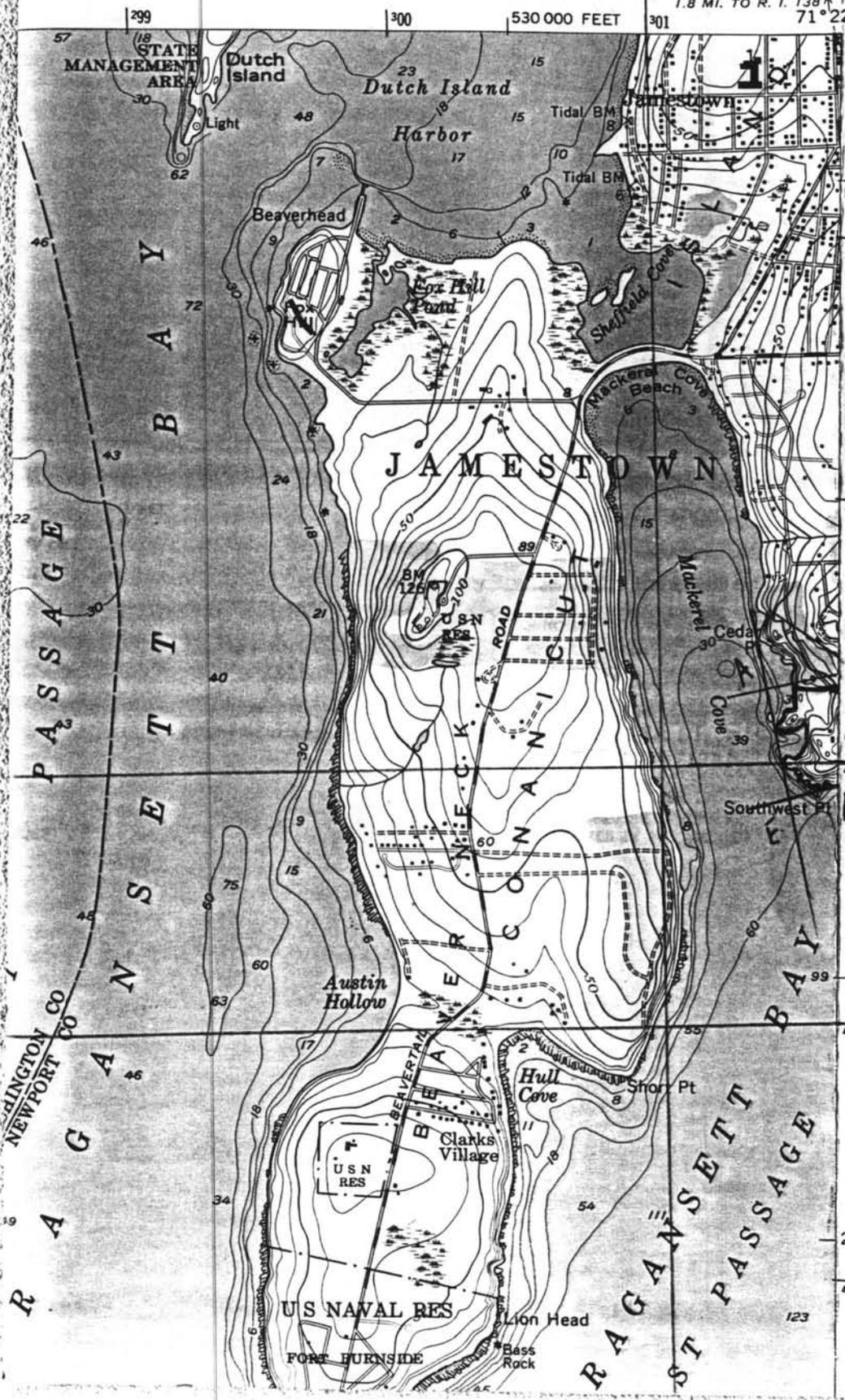
Geographical Data

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
A	<u>19</u>	<u>301410</u>	<u>4594290</u>	B	<u>19</u>	<u>301760</u>	<u>4594350</u>
C	<u>19</u>	<u>301860</u>	<u>4594270</u>	D	<u>19</u>	<u>301840</u>	<u>4593930</u>
E	<u>19</u>	<u>301490</u>	<u>4593860</u>				

NARRAGANSETT PIER QUADRANGLE
 RHODE ISLAND
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

6767 III SE
 (PRUDENCE ISLAND)

1.8 MI. TO R. I. 138
 71°22'30"
 41°30'



On 2 Quads:
 Newport +
 Narragansett

Horseshoe / Marble
 Newport County
 Jamestown, RI

A 19-301410-4594290

B 19-301760-4594350

C 19-301860-4594270

D 19-301840-4593930

E 19-301490-4593860

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U.S. NAVAL RES
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Horsehead/Marbella
Newport Cty., Jamestown, RI
Photo #1



Horsehead/Marbella
Newport City, Jamestown, RI
Photo # 8



Horshead/Marbella
Newport Cty., Jamestown, RI
Photo #7



Harscheax / Marbella
Newport City, Jamestown, RI
Photo # 6



Horsehead/Marbella
Newport City, Jamestown, RI
Photo #5



Horshead / Marbella
Newport City., Jamestown, RI
Photo # 2



Horshead / Marbella
Newport City, Jamestown, RI
Photo # 4



Horsehead/Marbella
Newport City, Jamestown, RI
Photo #3



Horshead / Marbella
Newport City, Jamestown, RI
Photo # 2